World Philosophy
Part I

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World Philosophy
Part I
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Professors Higgins and Solomon have also released, on audiotape and videotape, a series of lectures on Nietzsche entitled The Will to Power: The Philosophy of Friedrich Nietzsche (with The Teaching Company).
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World Philosophy

Scope:

This set of twenty-four lectures introduces the student to some of the central views in the world's diverse philosophical traditions. Using the orientation of Western thought as a departure, the course considers some of the alternative worldviews that developed in Africa, the Americas, India, China, and Japan.

The first lecture suggests the extent of world philosophy, tracing key developments throughout the world and emphasizing parallels among traditions. Lectures Two through Four survey some of the key themes and emphases in Western thought. Lecture Two considers ancient Greek thought about the difference between appearance and reality, focusing on Plato's explanation in terms of two distinct realms, the material world and the truer world of the Forms. This lecture also considers Aristotle's rejection of the two worlds theory and his alternative analysis of the world in terms of natural kinds. Lecture Three discusses the influence of Judaism, Christianity, and Islam on Western thought with regard to the nature of the human being. Lecture Four describes the prominence of reason in many Western thinkers' understanding of ethics and the nature of the good life for human beings.

Lecture Five begins a comparison of Western thought with philosophy elsewhere by indicating some differences between Western presuppositions and those of the traditional Yoruba tribe of Nigeria. This comparison will reveal ways in which Western thought is idiosyncratic, developing its own unique mix of emphases and explanations. Lecture Six considers the potential for non-Western thought to influence Western philosophy. This lecture discusses the current ecological crisis and the possibility that the American Indians' understanding of human beings' relation to nature might help industrialized societies to develop an approach that is more sustainable than its current orientation.

Lecture Seven turns to the effects of Western influence on non-Western thought. In particular, this lecture discusses the difficulties encountered by contemporary thinkers in Africa and Latin America as they attempt to articulate a philosophy that is appropriate for nations whose traditions were disrupted by colonialism and whose own outlooks have been transformed by encounters with the West. Lecture Eight considers the philosophical outlook developed in Aztec society before colonialism. It describes the Aztecs' understanding of human responsibility toward nature, as well as their answer to a question addressed by philosophers across the globe: What is the meaning of life in a world so filled with suffering? Lecture Nine turns to post-colonial Latin American thought and suggests that its strong emphasis on issues of ethics and political philosophy reflects the importance of these concerns in societies whose earlier social order has been disrupted by foreign invasion.
Lectures Ten through Thirteen address the answers to the question of life's meaning provided by the early traditions that developed on the Indian subcontinent, answers that contrast with the sociopolitical orientation of recent Latin American thought by focusing predominantly on inner life. Lecture Ten discusses the tendency of Indian thought to distinguish between appearance and reality (a tendency reminiscent of ancient Greek thought). This distinction is particularly important for Indian ideas about the nature of the self and the aims of human life. Lecture Eleven considers one ancient approach to the question of how the human self is related to the rest of reality, the Samkhya school's analysis in terms of two principles, consciousness and material nature. The Samkhya school contends that the spiritual goal for human beings is to liberate consciousness from its connection with the material world, an achievement that is facilitated by yoga, or spiritual discipline. Lecture Twelve considers the alternative explanation of the self's relationship to the world offered by the Vedic traditions. The Vedic traditions contend that there is only one reality, a supreme power called Brahman, and that everything else is illusory. Lecture Thirteen discusses the synthesis of insights from both Samkhya and the Vedic traditions that emerges in the Bhagavad Gita, a part of a long epic poem, the Mahabharata. The Bhagavad Gita accepts the idea of Brahman as a single reality, but it also promotes a type of yoga that is focused on attending to one's everyday duties in a selfless fashion.

Lectures Fourteen through Sixteen discuss the development of Buddhist thought in southern Asia. Lecture Fourteen considers the teachings of the historical Buddha, the prince Siddhartha Gautama, whose philosophy proposed a solution to the world's suffering through the elimination of selfish craving. Lecture Fifteen considers some of the doctrines that were articulated to explain features of the Buddha's insight. It also considers the divergence of two major schools of Buddhism, the Theravada and the Mahayana, which differ in their interpretation of the spiritual goal and the means for achieving it. Lecture Sixteen discusses certain influential philosophical formulations of the Mahayana understanding developed by Nagarjuna seven centuries after the life of the Buddha.

We postpone discussion of Buddhism's development in China until we have considered the two most prominent traditions of ancient Chinese thought, Confucianism and Daoism. Lecture Seventeen focuses on certain features of the Chinese view of reality that are common to both schools, particularly the idea that the world is fundamentally energy in a process of continual change. Lectures Eighteen through Twenty consider the philosophy of Confucius and his intellectual descendants Mencius and Xunzi. Lecture Eighteen discusses the philosophical efforts of Confucius to restore civility and cooperation to a society on the verge of disintegrating because of warfare and a climate of mistrust. An important theme in this lecture is Confucius's emphasis on ritual as a means of creating social harmony. Lecture Nineteen considers some of the particular virtues that Confucius recommends as valuable for regenerating a more humane social order. Lecture Twenty compares the interpretations of Confucianism provided by Mencius and Xunzi, focusing on the way their alternative understandings of human nature result in different approaches to the ideas of Confucius.

Lectures Twenty-One and Twenty-Two discuss Daoist thought and the Daoists' criticisms of Confucianism. Lecture Twenty-One emphasizes the Daoist insistence that political power and preconceived formulations (including ritual) can be harmful and the Daoist ideal of non-assertiveness. Lecture Twenty-Two considers the Daoist spiritual ideal, ziran, or spontaneity. Lecture Twenty-Two also describes the way in which Daoist terms helped Buddhism to gain a foothold in China. Lecture Twenty-Three discusses the Japanese aesthetic orientation toward nature, which proved to be hospitable for the development of Zen. Lecture Twenty-Four reviews some of the central philosophical questions we have considered and the answers given by various traditions. The lecture concludes with the suggestions that the synthesis of ideas from various traditions that we observe in Zen is typical of philosophical traditions and that we should expect future answers to our philosophical quandaries to be enriched by the diverse traditions that are our common human inheritance.
Lecture One
Beginnings

Scope: Philosophy is prompted by the human condition. It developed as people around the globe raised similar questions. Parallel developments occurred in societies that were not in contact with one another, but each society had its own way of approaching basic philosophical questions. New questions were raised as societies came into contact by way of commerce, religious movements, exploration, invasions, wars, and colonialism. This course is prompted, in part, by the question of how we might understand the worldviews of different cultures.

Outline

I. Philosophy enables us to travel imaginatively into other times and places.
   A. The history of philosophy shows us how people in various contexts have confronted the problems they faced.
   B. Awareness of philosophical history from many quarters is both practical and enjoyable in its own right.

II. Philosophy developed around the globe as people asked questions about who we are and what our place is in the scheme of things, such as:
   A. What are we?
   B. What else is there and how am I related to the rest?
   C. What is the structure of the world?
   D. How should I interact with other beings?
   E. How do human beings fit into nature?
   F. What is my goal as a human being?
   G. What is worthwhile?

III. The early beginning of philosophical thinking is indicated by the remains of prehistoric societies.
   A. Cave paintings may indicate that even in the Paleolithic era, human beings distinguished between the real everyday world and another “world” of painted representations.
      1. Joseph Lyons observes that prehistoric cave paintings are usually found in especially inaccessible places.
      2. Lyons speculates that these locations were selected to separate the world of these representations and the world of everyday life.
      3. If so, such art probably stimulated further ideas of a reality that differed from the everyday.

IV. Human experience, particularly the experience of conflict, raises some of the questions that provoke philosophical thought.
   A. Throughout the world, early thinkers proposed answers to the questions: How should we live? How should we get along?
   B. Among these were Zarathustra (660–583) in Persia, Moses among the Hebrew tribes, and the authors of the Indian scriptures, the Vedas, each of whom prescribed an entire way of life to their societies.

V. The German philosopher Karl Jaspers speaks of an “Axial Period” around 500 B.C.E., which he considers to be a turning point in human history. At this point, innovative new views about reality developed at various places at scattered points around the globe.
   A. Among the innovators in human thought that lived in the centuries surrounding 500 B.C.E. are Confucius, Laozi (Lao Tzu), and Zhuangzi (Chuang Tzu) in China; the Buddha and the authors of the Upanishads in India; Zarathustra in Persia; Elijah, Isaiah, and Jeremiah in Palestine; Parmenides, Heraclitus, and Plato in Greece.
   B. To this number we should add Socrates, the teacher of Plato, who challenged the authority of tradition and defended the authority of reason as our primary access to reality.
   C. The significance of this era, according to Jaspers, was that the age of myths that were simply accepted came to an end; in the new era, philosophers questioned traditional views and tried to come to an understanding of the nature of the world as a whole.

VI. Other significant moments have also had profound effects on subsequent human experience.
   A. The founding of the world’s great religions might be considered philosophical turning points, for example, the founding of Christianity by Jesus (ca. 5 B.C.E.–30 C.E.) and the founding of Islam by Muhammad (ca. 570–632).
Lecture Two
Western Metaphysics

Scope: The West occupied itself early on with the question of what is true. The Greeks, convinced by their observations that things were not as they appeared to be, sought a fundamental substance underlying appearances. The pre-Socratic philosophers who pursued this project were forerunners of our natural scientists. Plato contended that the fundamental reality was not a physical substance but a transcendent realm of eternal Forms. Aristotle, by contrast, contended that the forms of things were immanent structures. Both distinguished appearances from what is more fundamentally real and held that reason was the key to understanding the latter. The quest for a basic substance underlying appearances launched Western science.

Outline

I. People around the world have speculated about the causes of human error, some of which (like optical illusions) do not seem to be easily avoided.

II. The early Greek thinkers became convinced that something more permanent underlay the changes that occur.

A. This idea motivated the quest for a basic, enduring substance.

B. The first Greek philosophers (called the pre-Socratics) proposed various candidates for the basic substance.

1. Thales proposed water as the fundamental substance.
2. Anaximenes proposed that air is fundamental and that it becomes other things by expanding and contracting.
3. Anaximander proposed something more abstract, which he called apeiron, the indefinite. Apeiron resembles “matter” in that it is a concept for what endures through all changes.
4. Thinkers called “atomists,” such as Democritus, proposed that the movements of tiny particles accounted for all the things that we observe.

C. These suggestions are still evident in present-day physics and chemistry. We still characterize the states of matter in terms of solids, liquids, gases, and combustion and use the atomic model.

D. Pythagoras discovered that strings whose lengths were related to each other in simple ratios sound in harmony. He offered a different account of what endures despite change: Number is the basic reality.

E. A further debate about what is basic ensued between Heraclitus and Parmenides.

1. Heraclitus claimed that change is the fundamental reality.
2. Parmenides, by contrast, held that the unchanging is the fundamental reality. (This position became dominant in Western thought.)

III. Plato contended that fundamental reality is transcendent, not physical.

A. Plato claimed that everything in our world reflects one of the eternal Forms that exist in a transcendent realm.
B. These Forms are accessible to reason, and they are the fundamental reality. Things in the material world are not ultimately real, but instead are like shadows to the Forms.
C. However, physical needs and desires motivate most people to treat the material world as the only reality of value to us. The body interferes with our attainment of our true goal, according to Plato.
D. Plato's Myth of the Cave suggests that the genuine philosopher, who loves wisdom, is rare.
E. Nevertheless, our souls have a natural desire to see the Forms.
F. In a previous condition, our souls saw the Forms directly. We are fallen from a more perfect state.
G. The most salient, perceptible Form is the Form of beauty.
H. Although the Forms are described as multiple, they are all part of the most comprehensive Form, the good.
   1. To know the good is to have the big picture of reality.
   2. To know the good is also to be motivated to be good.

VI. Plato's influential theory established some basic themes in Western thought that are not universal:

A. What does not change is superior to what changes.
B. The world we experience is only a reflection of a truer realm of absolute reality.
C. The body interferes with the spiritual goals of human beings.
D. All things participate in a fundamental harmony.

V. Aristotle, Plato's student, disagreed with part of Plato's account. He denied that transcendent Forms existed.

A. He agreed that there were enduring patterns that underlay superficial appearances.
B. Aristotle found these patterns in immanent structures. The essence of a thing is the unchanging structure that makes each thing the kind of thing it is, which it shares with other things of the same sort.
C. Contemplation of unchanging things is the highest life for human beings.
D. Reason is our means of gaining insight into reality.

VI. Both Plato and Aristotle distinguished surface appearances from more profound realities and held that reason was the key to recognizing the difference.

Essential Reading:
Plato, Republic, Book VII, lines 514–518.
Aristotle, Metaphysics, Book VII (Z).

Supplementary Reading:
Irwin, Classical Thought, pp. 28–52 and 85–133.
Solomon and Higgins, A Short History of Philosophy, pp. 25–68.

Questions to Consider:
1. Do you find either Plato's idea of the Forms or Aristotle's idea of essences the most plausible explanation for how things in our world are structured? Why?
2. How would you go about distinguishing those qualities of a thing that are part of its essence (in Aristotle's sense) from those that are not?
Lecture Three
Soul and Body

Scope: Many aspects of Western thought were shaped by the three major monotheistic religious traditions. An important legacy of the interaction between philosophical and religious traditions is the dominant Western conception of the core of a human being as an immortal, individual soul, distinct from the body. René Descartes, in a particularly influential account, equated the soul with the mind, which is understood as a thinking substance. Descartes contended that reason, not the senses, was the fundamental faculty of knowledge, enabling us to overcome our fallible sensory awareness. Later, Immanuel Kant contended that our minds always structure sensory awareness, and that our knowledge is limited to what is accessible through experience.

Outline

I. Central to Western thought is the significance of the human self.
   A. One of Socrates’s most famous dictums was “Know thyself,” the motto inscribed at the Temple of Apollo in Delphi.
   B. In Christian and Islamic thought, and some strains of Judaism, the human being is understood as a personal soul that survives death. (We will see some parallels and differences in the Indian tradition.)

II. Drawing from Plato, as well as the religious traditions, the dominant view in the West has been a form of mind/body dualism.
   A. The mind, or consciousness, often equated with the soul, is the central feature of personal identity.
   B. The body is conjoined with the soul; yet it is not essential to the soul.
   C. The distinction between the mind and body was crucial to the views of ancient Stoics (who flourished in the Greco-Roman world from the 4th century B.C.E. through the first few centuries C.E.). The Stoics believed that one could achieve tranquility by controlling the mind and psychologically detaching oneself from one’s circumstances.
   D. In the view of some philosophers (particularly such Christian thinkers as Augustine and Martin Luther), soul and body were not only distinct but even inimical to each other.

III. Descartes offered a famous defense of the distinction between mind and body, often called “Cartesian” dualism.
   A. In his Meditations Descartes proposes the experiment of “methodological skepticism” from which he concludes that there is one thing he cannot be deceived about: the existence of his own mind.

B. Descartes’ cogito (“I think, therefore I am”), equates the self with “a thinking substance.”

C. Descartes argues that he can know the truth about things because he is a thinking substance and, therefore, rational. (He also depends on his faith that God would not systematically deceive him.)

D. Cartesian dualism raises the question of how the two kinds of substances operate together; substance metaphysics (the position that there is some basic substance or substances) influenced the way Descartes formulated his theory: The mind is a “thinking substance.”

IV. Western epistemological debates were affected by the Cartesian dualism.
   A. Descartes’ claim that “the natural light of reason” was the fundamental faculty of knowledge contrasts with that of the British “empiricists,” who claimed that the senses were the source of all knowledge.
   B. For Descartes, the senses are subject to natural deficiencies; what they present should be rationally scrutinized before taken as knowledge.

V. The most revolutionary thinker in modern Western thought, Immanuel Kant, offers an alternative account of reality.
   A. Kant distinguishes the world as it appears to us through our senses (the “phenomenal world”) from the world “in itself,” (“noumenal world”).
   B. He contends that we can never know the world, independent of our faculties; the order of our world is the order of our own minds.
   C. As humans, however, we also have reality “in ourselves.” Kant considers this reality our rational, moral will.

Essential Reading:
Descartes, Meditations, First Meditation.

Supplementary Reading:

Questions to Consider:
1. What are some considerations that lend support to the theory of mind/body dualism? What are some considerations that suggest that mind and body are not distinct kinds of things?
2. Why is our knowledge necessarily restricted if Kant’s account of noumenal and phenomenal reality is correct?
Lecture Four
The Good Life and the Role of Reason

Scope: In the previous lecture, we observed that Kant distinguished the phenomenal world, which we can know, from the noumenal world, which we cannot. Although we cannot know or characterize the noumenal realm, we are aware of the difference between ourselves as influenced by the environment and our desires and ourselves as having some degree of will power. We can choose to act in ways that are contrary to the desires elicited in us by phenomena. Our true self is "in itself," independent of the causal nexus of the phenomenal world.

Kant follows a long Western tradition that holds reason to be the key to the good life. Plato and Aristotle both held that reason enabled us to recognize the good toward which we should aim, although they understood "the good" differently. Kant, like other modern thinkers, focused more on rules for moral behavior than on the virtues involved in the good life.

Outline
I. In the last lecture, we considered Kant’s distinction between the phenomenal and the noumenal worlds and his claim that our mental faculties format the data taken in by our senses.
   A. Anything we know is always already shaped by our mental faculties.
   B. Causality is among the formatting features, which Kant calls "the categories." Causality interconnects processes in the phenomenal world.
   C. Things in the phenomenal world influence each other, and science explores these interconnections.
   D. We are part of the world we experience. We are phenomenal beings. We are motivated by desires for things. (Something attractive "causes" the "inclination" as an effect.)
   E. As physical beings in the phenomenal world, therefore, we are subject to inclinations.
   F. However, our own true reality is in the noumenal realm.
   G. That true reality is our will, which is free and able to resist our naturally motivated desires.
   H. Through this account of the true self, Kant defends the freedom of human choice against those who believe that human beings act only from causal necessity, like other things in nature.

II. Reason, according to Kant, is the mental power that enables us to distinguish right and wrong.
   A. In believing that reason is the key to how to live, Kant concurs with Plato and Aristotle.
   B. Although they disagreed about what the good life is, Plato and Aristotle both considered reason our means for achieving it.
      1. According to Plato, reason gives us access to the Forms.
      2. According to Aristotle, the exercise of reason is essential to human fulfillment, because reason is the distinguishing characteristic of human beings.
   C. Kant, like other modern thinkers, however, holds that reason specifies certain rules to which our behavior should conform.
   D. Kant contends that reason would lead us to recognize "the categorical imperative," the moral law as summarized in a single statement. Kant has several formulations of this statement, indicating:
      1. that we should never act on a principle that we could not in good faith endorse everyone acting on, and
      2. that we should not treat human beings as mere means for pursuing our own projects.
   E. Among those who disagree with Kant, but accept the idea that morality should be understood in terms of rules or principles, are the utilitarians, who contend that one morally ought to do what promotes the greatest good for the greatest number.
   F. Although recent Western discussion has returned to consideration of the cultivation of virtues, the dominant tendency remains to articulate morality in terms of rules. We will return to this theme later on, when we consider the very different starting point taken by Chinese thought.

Essential Reading:

Supplementary Reading:
Guyer, "Introduction: The Starry Heavens and the Moral Law."

Questions to Consider:
1. Do you agree with Kant that reason is the means by which we come to know right and wrong?
2. Do you think that rules (as opposed to ideals or role models) are the best means of formulating insights as to how we ought to live? Why or why not?
Lecture Five
Western and African Thought Compared

Scope: A number of central ideas that emerged through the history of Western thought are not universal. These include the ideas that: (1) some basic substance underlies what is apparent; (2) what is fundamentally real is unchanging; (3) mind and body are distinct kinds of things; (4) the self is constituted by an individual soul; (5) time is linear; and (6) reason is our means for coming to know the most important truths. Other cultures start with different assumptions. The Yoruba tribe of Nigeria, for example, along with many other peoples of sub-Saharan Africa, traditionally hold that: (1) reality is composed of forces, not substances; (2) change is the norm; (3) the mind and body are not distinct kinds of things; (4) the person is composed of multiple soul elements; (5) time is cyclical; and (6) divination is a means for learning the most important kinds of knowledge.

Outline

I. In our quick look at Western thought we see a number of themes that are recurrent starting points, although not accepted by all thinkers.
   A. Underlying and accounting for appearances is a more basic substance.
   B. The unchanging is more true than what changes.
   C. The mind and the body are distinct and are different kinds of things.
   D. To be a person is to have an individual soul.
   E. Time is linear.
   F. Reason is our means of reaching the most important truths.

II. These views are not universal, however. To illustrate the contrast, let us consider some traditional views of the Yoruba tribe of Nigeria. (Some of these ideas are similar to those held by other tribes in sub-Saharan Africa.)
   A. The world is composed of forces with which human beings interact.
   B. The Supreme God (Olorun) is a supreme force (ashe).
   C. The Supreme God is very distant. Human beings do not worship Olorun directly, but indirectly through deity gods (orishas).
   D. Human beings themselves are characterized by ashe (which originates in God), as are animals and other natural entities.
   E. Artworks can also be repositories of ashe.
   F. Change is the fundamental character of the world.
   G. Mind and body are not distinct.

H. Spiritual elements are associated with parts of the body.

IV. Yoruba of various areas have different accounts of the specific elements.
   A. According to one account, the soul elements include:
      1. ara—the body,
      2. emi—the life principle (understood as the breath),
      3. ori—the inner head (or personality), and
      4. ese—the legs (principle of movement).
   B. The inner head (constructed by a potter god, Ajala, according to one account) determines the destiny of the person.
      1. Each person chooses a head before being born.
      2. Ajala is a rather careless potter, whose works are often flawed.
   C. In another account, one’s ancestral guardian spirit (which resides in the head during life) appears before the Supreme God and chooses a destiny, which the Supreme God usually grants.
   D. The belief that one chooses one’s destiny is rather odd, because one is ignorant of what is involved in the selection.
   E. Many philosophical systems debate the idea of choosing one’s destiny.
      1. For example, Aristotle’s philosophy questions that human beings seem to be born with certain character traits; it seems unfair that some people seem innately disposed to have certain good traits.
      2. Aristotle recognizes that we have different tendencies from birth, but he argues that we still have to “acquire character” through developing good habits and working with what we were born with.
   F. For the Yoruba, destiny determines the rough outlines of fate, but the details can be affected by personal choices. Although we all have a destiny, we nevertheless have moral obligations.
   G. If we arrive on earth with a bad head, we might persuade the gods to improve our luck by offering sacrifices to them.
   I. Destiny determines when we return to heaven (Olorun’s abode, where we account for the good and evil we have done on earth.) If we are killed before this time, we remain ghosts on earth until our time is up.
   J. Because destiny is largely fixed, divination practices can help to determine what occupation to pursue. The Ifa corpus, an oral literature, is used to interpret the most common Yoruba divination practice.

V. One is not born a human being, but becomes one.
   A. One becomes a person developmentally, but one is not a complete human being until one’s moral obligations are fulfilled.
      1. To be a real person is to be consistently moral.
      2. A person has ethical obligations to other members of the tribe and the family, including the dead. (Ancestors are intermediaries between the living and the gods.)
3. These include contributing to the community through work and regenerating the spirits of the ancestors by having children.

C. An individual's destiny is linked with that of the entire community, which is thought to include the dead and unborn, as well as the living.

VI. Time is cyclical, and people are reincarnated.
A. The Yoruba believe that ancestors' spirits are reincarnated in later generations. The common names Babatunde ("father returns") and Yetunde ("mother returns") express this belief.
B. Usually, the same soul is reborn in the same lineage so that it can stay with its descendants.
C. Reincarnation is cyclical, not a linear continuum from past to future.
D. Time is cyclical, and measured by events in recurrent natural cycles.
E. John Mbiti (a Kenyan theologian) claims that sub-Saharan Africans typically distinguish two kinds of time.
   1. One of these is actual time: the present, what has been experienced in the past, and the immediate future.
   2. The other is the more distant past, where actual past events and the dead reside.
   3. There is no distant future.
   4. Mbiti notes that all African people have a creation myth but no apocalyptic myth.

VII. Reason is not the privileged mode of knowing reality. Divination is the means of discovering the most important things about one's destiny. The Cartesian concept of mind/body is not part of Yoruba thinking, nor is the Western concept of individualism.

Supplementary Reading:
Gbadegein, "Current Trends in African Philosophy."
Trimner, "The Myth of Authenticity: Personhood, Traditional Culture, and African Philosophy."

Questions to Consider:
1. Can one really "choose" when one does not know what the effects of the options would be? Do any of our choices involve full knowledge of what the effects of the options would be?
2. The Yoruba believe that although our basic nature is fixed before birth, we can nevertheless influence our destiny. Does this strike you as plausible?

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Lecture Six
Traditional Beliefs and Philosophy

Scope: The colonial period did much to undermine orally transmitted cultures in Africa and the Americas. Western assumptions about philosophy came to be applied to the question of whether indigenous worldviews constituted philosophy. The question of whether such a thing as African philosophy exists, for example, remains a major debate in African thought today. Some thinkers in African and Latin American societies argue that this question itself presupposes the primacy of Western thought and that this notion is precisely what should be challenged. These debates draw attention to a question that every generation in every culture must consider in its own right: How should we relate to the thought of our society, both indigenous and assimilated?

Outline

I. Colonialism in various parts of the world, including Africa and the Americas, undermined indigenous philosophical traditions.
   A. Sometimes the colonizers deliberately intended to destroy these traditions.
   B. The oral transmission of traditions has sometimes been actively impeded. The American Allotment Act of 1887, for example, prohibited the practice of traditional Indian religions.

II. In those areas, Western philosophical notions have been used as the standard for what constitutes philosophy.
   A. The relationship of philosophy to cultural identity is an issue in both African and Latin American societies recovering from colonialism.
      1. Universalists argue that philosophy is the same endeavor throughout the world, concerned to establish the validity of its principles through reason.
      2. Philosophy enables us to escape the limitations of our own worldview.
      3. Culturalists, by contrast, contend that philosophy is always pursued from within particular cultural contexts, by human beings with particular perspectives. Thus, philosophies are constructed to deal with historically and geographically variable situations.
   B. These issues arose because philosophers in Africa and Latin America came to recognize the dominance in their own societies of European philosophical traditions, which were often used to justify colonialism.
      1. Cheikh Anta Diop, a Senegalese intellectual, for example, contends that philosophy is implicit in the various manifestations of cultural
H. Africans should be concerned with liberating themselves from the legacies of colonialism in the present. Ethnophilosophy is irrelevant. (This is the view of Frantz Fanon, a philosopher from Martinique, who advocates violence to overcome the harmful legacy of colonialism.)

V. Other thinkers, while not concerned to systematize the details of traditional views, still encourage the celebration of what is unique in African thought.

A. This outlook is characteristic of the negritude movement.

B. Léopold Sédar Senghor, one of the movement's originators, as well as the long-term president of Senegal, argued that African thought is inherently different from European thought.
1. For Senghor, Africans know things in a more intuitive and participatory way than do Europeans. "Negritude" is this characteristically African orientation.
2. The European and African worldviews each achieve an irreplacable truth. Dialogue should be encouraged.
3. This view values traditional African approaches to philosophical questions. However, it stresses the epistemological approach more than the specific contents of traditional beliefs.
4. Critics argue that the idea of negritude, while encouraging self-affirmation of formerly colonized people, promotes an insupportable racial ideology. It reinforces the stereotype of Africans as "primitive" and "irrational."
5. Negritude has also been criticized for assuming the cultural homogeneity of all African thought.

VI. Currently, thinkers in post-colonial areas are concerned to develop philosophies that will help people to understand their own experiences.

Essential Reading:
Valadez, "Latin American Philosophy," pp. 231-238.

Supplementary Reading:
Imbo, An Introduction to African Philosophy, chapter 1.
Schutte, chapters 2 and 3.

Questions to Consider:
1. Do you think that ideas must be written down in order to count as philosophy?
2. What traditional Western beliefs might figure in an ethnophilosophy of Western thought?
Lecture Seven
American Indian Thinking

Scope: Often the way a tradition answers one basic question has implications for its other answers. Western thought, for instance, has typically answered the question “How are human beings related to nature?” by proposing that human beings are the masters of nature, in certain respects superior to it. Some critics of the Western tradition have recently argued that this vision of humanity’s relation to nature has led to a deficient vision of how we should treat animals, the natural environment, and even other human beings. Some see the values in the American Indian orientation, which presupposes that human beings are part of a natural ecology, as offering insights of vital importance to the modern world for dealing with its environmental crises.

Outline

I. Often the way a tradition answers one basic question has implications for some of its other answers.
   A. Western thought has typically considered human beings the masters of nature and emphasized the differences between nature and humanity.
   B. In light of contemporary environmental problems, some critics have suggested that this long-standing Western vision of humanity’s relation to nature should be changed.
   C. Some have proposed that industrialized societies should learn from American Indian thought.
   D. Two thinkers who have proposed this view are B. J. Baird Callicott and Thomas Overholt.
      1. They drew on the ideas of Aldo Leopold.
      2. Leopold proposed a “land ethic,” which posited that humans should see themselves as components of the natural world as a whole.
      3. This is, typically, the American Indian view.
   E. Although it is difficult to say much that applies to American Indians as a whole (given the perhaps 2,000 tribes in North America before Europeans arrived), some generalizations can be made about the American Indian view of the natural world.

II. The worldview of American Indian tribes contrasts with that of the Western tradition.
   A. Some central suppositions dominant in Western thought include the following:
      1. What is fundamentally real is unchanging.
      2. The self is constituted by an individual soul.
      3. We have moral responsibilities toward other human beings.
      4. We human beings have dominion over the world and its non-human creatures.
      5. Time is linear.
      6. Reason is the means for knowing the most important things.
      7. The spiritual and the material are different orders of reality.
   B. By contrast, American Indians generally believe the following:
      1. The natural world, which changes, is reality.
      2. The human self is related to all other beings, human and non-human, and to the earth itself.
      3. We have moral responsibilities to animals and to the earth, as well as other human beings.
      4. We are part of an interdependent ecology, and we are caretakers of the natural world.
      5. Time is best understood in terms of natural cycles.
      6. Reason is not the only means for coming to know important things.
      7. There is no sharp distinction between the spiritual and the material.

III. The changing natural world is reality.
   A. The world is a system of interconnected beings. One being affects another and vice versa.
   B. All living beings are energy processes.
   C. The natural world is referred to as a being.
   D. The natural world as a whole is considered to be a manifestation of “the Great Spirit.”
      1. The Great Spirit is not, however, anthropomorphically understood.
      2. Nevertheless, there is a sense of intimate connection with the Great Spirit.

IV. The human person is essentially relational.
   A. We are kin of all other beings.
      1. We have spiritual connections with animals and with the earth itself.
      2. Religiously, American Indians are typically pantheists. They believe that a single divine spirit is manifest in each thing.
   B. The idea of an isolated human individual does not make sense from an Indian point of view.
   C. Every creature is, in effect, a person.
      1. Each has its own appropriate good, and it should be allowed to pursue and maintain that good.
      2. All beings with bodies have consciousness.

V. Human beings have moral obligations to animals and to the earth.
   A. Human beings are obligated to show respect for animals:
1. By thanking the creature that they successfully hunt. The animals are considered to be parties to a gift exchange with human beings;
2. By trying not to break the animals' bones;
3. By returning animal bones to their appropriate element so that the creatures might be reincarnated.

B. Human beings have responsibilities to the land.
1. Land should not be enclosed or made private property.
2. Human beings should conserve land and respect it.

VI. Human beings are part of an interdependent ecology, and we are caretakers of the natural world.
A. The circle is an Indian image for the texture of relationships in which we and other natural beings participate.
B. The natural world manifests circle within circles, as Lame Deer observes.
C. Some contemporary Western philosophers (e.g., Peter Singer) have talked of a circle of expanding concern. This image bears some similarity to the image of the circle as American Indians think of it.

VII. Time is best understood in terms of natural cycles.
A. The processes of nature operate in cycles.
B. Black Elk describes the ages of a human being in terms of a circle.

VIII. Reason is not the only means for coming to know the most important things.
A. Shamans are spiritual individuals (medicine men) who use non-rational methods to mediate between the members of the living community and the spirit world. The Lakota call their shamans wicasa wakan, meaning "holy man."
1. Shamans are seers, or visionaries, who come to know things through mystical participation (participation mystique) with another creature.
2. Shamans are often described as going on challenging journeys or ordeals. According to Joseph Campbell, these "journeys" are explorations of the deeper layers of the psyche.
3. These visions are a legitimate way of knowing.
4. A shaman has a special relationship with a particular animal that appears in the first vision. The shaman is obligated to treat the animals of this type with special respect, not killing any of them.
5. Sorcerers also mystically participate in other creatures, often walking around in the form of a bear. Sorcerers use dreams, among other things, to spy and to influence people (by directing the content of dreams).

B. Dreams are another means of knowing.

IX. Dreams are considered a mode of experiencing reality, another form of consciousness.
A. The world of dreaming and the everyday world are continuous with each other. (This idea contrasts with Descartes's view.)
B. In dreams, one's spirit temporarily dissociates from one's body and encounters other spirits (both human and non-human).
C. Black Elk says, "Sometimes dreams are wiser than waking." In dreams, one encounters other beings in their essential forms.
D. Practical knowledge can also be learned through dreams. For example, healers learn about the powers of certain roots through dreams.

IX. No sharp distinction exists between the spiritual and the material world.
A. The sacred character of the natural world is reflected in rituals.
B. As an example, Sam Gill describes the end of the Hopi initiation ceremony into the kachina cult.
1. The children discovered that the kachinas (whom they know as gift-givers, eaters of the naughty, clowns, what they will become when they die) are really masked men from their own tribe.
2. The children are upset and disillusioned. (We might compare this to similar cases of children's discoveries about Santa Claus and the tooth fairy.)
C. Gill claims that this disillusionment teaches them that some things are not what they appear.
D. It also suggests a sacred dimension in which ordinary things participate, in addition to their mundane character.
E. The rituals transform ordinary things into sacred reality.

Essential Reading:
Overholt and Callicott, "American Indian Philosophy."
Gill, "The Shadow of a Vision Yonder."

Supplementary Reading:
Callicott, "American Indian Land Wisdom?: Sorting out the Issues."
Overholt and Callicott, Clothed-in-Fur and Other Tales, pp. 139–160.

Questions to Consider:
1. Does the Western worldview acknowledge dreams as a source of knowledge? If so, how does this outlook differ from that typical of the American Indians?
2. Do rituals in your own experience transform the mundane into something sacred?
Lecture Eight
Mesoamerican Thought

Scope: The idea that human beings have responsibilities to nature is not incompatible with efforts to enhance human control. The complex calendar system of the Aztecs, for example, was motivated by an effort to know when dramatic natural events were going to occur. Such events were understood as manifestations of cosmic forces that influenced the human world, and the Aztecs believed that rituals (conducted at the appropriate times) could channel and direct these forces. Somewhat like Plato, the Aztecs believed that the entities of this world reflected something more real, which they construed as ideas in the mind of the divine creator. By appealing to a truer reality to which human beings can have some access, their vision helped them deal with a philosophical question that is urgent in all traditions: What is the meaning of life in an apparently transitory world?

Outline

I. Western thought has predominantly concurred with Kant that in order to be able to act morally, we must be free to resist our natural impulses.
   A. Western thought differs from that of many other societies in linking our ability to be moral to a radical notion of freedom.
   B. Many other societies believe that human beings are strongly influenced by natural forces that they do not control.
   C. This does not, however, lead them to doubt that human beings are able to fulfill certain moral responsibilities. The Yoruba, for example, believe that they have obligations, even though destiny determines much about what their lives will involve.
   D. The Aztecs and other pre-colonial peoples of Mesoamerica believed that forces from other planes of existence largely determine human life.
      1. Yet they believed that they had obligations to beings on these other planes.
      2. They also believed that they could, to some extent, control the effects of these forces.

II. The Aztecs believed that the universe is composed of interactive planes in time and space.
   A. For the Aztecs, space is divided into three interacting planes (with subdivisions): the celestial plane, the terrestrial plane, and the underworld.

   1. Supernatural forces move from plane to plane through spiral-shaped channels (maltitlals), entering the terrestrial plane through stones, caves, fire, sunlight, and animals.
   2. Rituals were aimed at controlling these forces.

   B. Time, too, had three mutually interactive planes: human time, mythic time, and transcendent time.
      1. Human time lies at the intersection between the underworld and celestial levels of space.
      2. Mythic time preceded terrestrial time. The gods struggled, died, and were dismembered in mythic time.
      3. Transcendent time is the plane of the creator gods, who made order first appear.
      4. Mythic and transcendent time continue to influence human beings.

   C. The calendar indicated when the periodic influences of supernatural forces would occur.

   D. To tap these forces and control their effects, religious rituals had to be performed at the right times.

   E. The Aztec cosmological system is a largely deterministic, but it allows room for the human will to modify fate.
      1. The place in space-time where one was born determines much about one’s destiny.
      2. One’s fate can be managed to a certain extent.
      3. Choosing an auspicious name for a baby, for example, could improve the baby’s circumstances.
      4. By developing self-control and discipline, one could affect one’s circumstances for the better.
      5. Education could help in this effort. One developed “a face” (an individual character) through education.
      6. Nevertheless, fate, both in this life and the next, was ultimately in the gods’ hands.

III. Human beings had responsibilities as caretakers of cosmic stability.

   A. The order of the world is a topic of philosophical concern across societies.
      1. According to Plato, the order of the world derives from the Forms, which it reflects. According to Kant, the order of the world we experience is imposed by our own mental faculties.
      2. Many American Indian tribes understand the order of the world as the integrated balance of aspects of nature.
      3. The ancient Persians believed that the forces of chaos threaten to destroy order and that human beings must, therefore, commit themselves to preserving order.

   B. According to the Aztecs, cosmic stability was always precarious.
1. There had already been four ages with different suns, each ending with a catastrophe and the destruction of the human race.
2. The Aztecs were living in the age of the Fifth Sun.
3. Two gods (Nanhuatzin and Tecuicztectli) had sacrificed themselves by jumping into the divine hearth of the gods, and the sun had been born (a reincarnation of Nanhuatzin).

C. To maintain cosmic stability, sacrifices were necessary.
1. The gods needed to be repaid for their sacrifice.
2. The Fifth Sun (and the earth and rain) had to be preserved.
3. The sun’s energy could be replenished with the blood and other forces in the human body.
4. Human sacrifice was necessary to strengthen the gods and keep the universe secure.

IV. These human responsibilities had political repercussions.
A. The need for human sacrifice helped to justify the authoritarianism of Aztec society and the ceremonial wars that were practiced to provide victims for sacrifice.
B. Human sacrifice was understood as releasing the life forces of the human body.
1. Tonalli is the animating force in the head.
2. Teyotl, in the heart, provides emotion, memory, and knowledge.
3. Ihiyotl, in the liver, gives bravery, desire, hatred, love, and happiness. It was considered a gas and believed to make its possessor attractive to other people.
C. The release of life forces had military significance.
1. The tonalli of the community could be increased by means of decapitating enemy warriors.
2. Thus, warfare came to be seen as a religious obligation.

V. The Aztecs also had a critical philosophy.
A. The tlumatinime (the “knowers of things”) were the poets and philosophers of the Aztecs, who offered systematic reflections on myth and reality, truth and illusion.
1. According to some scholars, the tlumatinime were explicitly critical of the militaristic emphasis of their society.
2. They aimed to realize human potential by handing on the higher knowledge of Mexican society through the arts.
3. Their knowledge included science, moral codes, history, art, and practical wisdom.
4. Their schools of higher learning, called calmecacs, trained prospective priests or nobles.
B. The tlumatinime did not think that human beings could reach their aim on this plane; they believed life is a dream.

1. One of the songs in a collection from the pre-Colombian era says: “It may be that no one speaks the truth on earth.”
2. “Truth” in Nahua is etymologically linked to “root” or “foundation.”
3. The tlumatinime asked whether anything endured on earth.
C. Truth was, however, accessible to human beings, not through rational accounts but through poetic inspiration.
1. Works of art are the only enduring things a human being could leave behind.
2. Aesthetic rapture was the condition for glimpsing ultimate truth.
3. Compare this with Plato’s view that inspiration comes from the gods.

D. One ultimate truth was the duality of the Supreme God, Ometochtli, who was both father and mother.
E. Like many Western thinkers, the tlumatinime speculated about the afterlife.
1. Some thought that there was no afterlife and that we should “live for the day.”
2. Others believed in a number of possible destinations after this life.
3. If there were an afterlife, it was in the gods’ hands, not a reward for ethical behavior.
F. For the Aztecs, the closest human beings could get to insight into God was through the visions associated with poetic inspiration. This view makes for an interesting contrast with the epistemology of many societies, because the Aztec idea is that emotion, not reason, is the best way to gain insight into eternal truths.

Essential Reading:

Supplementary Reading:
Carrasco, Religions of Mesoamerica, pp. 58–91.
León-Portilla, Aztec Thought and Culture, pp. 3–24.
Valadez, “Pre-Columbian and Modern Philosophical Perspectives in Latin America,” pp. 81–100.

Questions to Consider:
1. To what extent, if any, do you think external influences determine our behavior? Do you think external influences limit the extent to which we are morally responsible?
2. Do you think poets and song writers sometimes reflect profound truth?
Lecture Nine
Ethics and Social Thought in Latin America

Scope: All cultures develop ethical philosophies to provide a framework for how people should interact. Certain proscriptions are fairly constant across cultures, such as the prohibition of murder and lying to those who have the right to know the truth. In addition to rules against certain types of conduct, cultures usually develop more positive ethical visions, often formulated in terms of virtues and explicit ideals both for the individual and for society as a whole. Societies combine these various kinds of ethical ideas in different ways. As we will see in later lectures, Indian thought has traditionally conceived of an individual's virtue in terms of his or her role in society, with little questioning of the way that society is structured. A contrasting vision developed in Latin America, where European colonizers dismantled traditional institutions. Since the conquest, Latin American thought, the topic of this lecture, has found sociopolitical questions to be the most pressing philosophical agenda.

Outline

I. All cultures develop ethical visions to enable human beings to live together.
   A. Certain behaviors are prohibited, while ideas are developed about what makes a person and a life good.
   B. On an individual level, these are frequently described in terms of virtues and given substance by means of paradigm examples (often conveyed through stories).
   C. Societies also commonly develop ideas about what constitutes a good society.

II. Societies take different approaches to combining these various aspects of ethical thought.
   A. Traditional Indian thought emphasized the obligations an individual has by virtue of his or her specific role in society, with little attention to the question of whether or not society was properly ordered.
   B. The West emphasizes the individual and often considers the needs of society to be the sum total of individuals' needs.
   C. Latin American thought, by contrast, has placed considerable emphasis on social justice and the ideal organization of society.

III. Ideas about how society should be structured are apparent in the social order of the Inca empire, which spanned 2,500 miles, 12 million people, and 20 languages.
   A. The empire was held together by means of an extensive bureaucracy and highway network.
   B. The Inca took a collectivist approach to the peoples they conquered.
      1. Assimilated communities were allowed to retain their customs and rituals as long as they worshiped the sun (Inti) as supreme deity and gave tribute (labor, food, materials).
      2. Significantly, the amount of tribute demanded was proportional to the community's production.
   C. In addition to the problems caused by colonizers' disruption of established ways of life, a number of intellectual currents prompted post-conquest Latin American thinkers to emphasize sociopolitical ideals.
      A. Christian missionaries tended to view Latin America as a land of innocence, untainted by the corruption of European society. They aspired to create a better social order than the one they had left behind.
      B. The Counter-Reformation was effective in Spain at the same time as the conquest. Scholasticism, which sought to use reason to enhance human understanding of revealed Christian truth, was the dominant philosophy imported from Europe.
      C. The post-conquest populations in Latin America were socially extremely stratified. Those of European backgrounds (who often felt themselves superior to those of Indian and African backgrounds) were socially dominant.
      D. Social stratification and a wide gulf between rich and poor motivated two divergent philosophical efforts. Some sought a philosophical justification of the status quo. Others attempted to develop a philosophically account of social justice with the intent of changing the current situation.
      E. The criollo populations (those of mixed, part indigenous descent) in Latin American countries eventually threw off foreign rule. Pensadores (thinkers) in these societies sought to do the same thing philosophically.
      F. Hope for progress encouraged the desire for the development of science and technology.
      G. Latin American philosophy is predominantly concerned with the practical consequences of holding particular views.
V. Some Latin American thinkers came to see positivism as an alternative to Christianity (which they had come to associate with the post-colonial status quo).

A. Positivism was a school of thought originated by August Comte in France. It asserted the following:
   1. Human behavior, like other natural phenomena, is governed by natural laws.
   2. Social scientists should discover and organize society according to these laws.
   3. A utopia would result.

B. Positivism was appealing in Latin American because it promised progress and development, as well as political stability.

VI. Many twentieth-century Latin American philosophers were critics of positivism. They argued that:

A. Positivism is too formal and abstract to be responsive to the unique circumstances of Latin America.
   1. Ironically, although it had been seen as an alternative to the legacy of colonialism, positivism was also a European import.
   2. Comte was a racist who believed in the superiority of Europeans.
   3. Positivism was also elitist, and it had been used in Mexico to justify a totalitarian regime.

B. "Scientific laws" cannot provide a sufficient explanation of human societies.
   1. Human beings are free to make moral decisions.
   2. Creativity and the arts cannot be explained deterministically.

C. Positivism assumes that values are a function of individual human goals. It does not acknowledge the collective dimension of human values or recognize that selfishness is harmful.
   1. A society structured by such ideas will ultimately be composed of individuals who try to exert themselves as little as possible, preferring that other people and machines do everything for them.
   2. The individual who thinks of himself as fundamentally a consumer becomes isolated from others and unfulfilled as a creative being.
   3. On the basis of this analysis, Mexican philosopher Antonio Caso argues that charity, not greed, yields the best kind of existence. Charity involves completely free creative action.

D. Positivism's technocratic ambitions promoted the impoverishment of spiritual values.

E. An aesthetic orientation toward reality was a better option than positivism. This was the position of Mexican philosopher José Vasconcelos.

1. Vasconcelos defended the importance of emotion. He claimed that emotion harmonizes the various orders of knowledge into a synthesis.

2. Emotion has an epistemological function. It completes the knowledge that the intellect only begins.

3. Aesthetic emotion (such as that which we experience in connection with music) puts us in touch with the flow of existence, the rhythms of reality.

4. The ultimate aim is spiritual union with the absolute.

F. Michael A. Weinstein suggests that the Latin American critics of positivism have much to offer contemporary thinkers in many cultures. Currently, efficient consumerism has eclipsed spiritual values.

VII. More recent developments in Latin American thought have largely focused on questions of social justice, particularly with respect to the distribution of wealth.

A. Marxism has been influential among some thinkers. They see its categories as useful for analyzing economic, political, and social problems.
   1. Marxism explicitly aims to change reality by bringing about a society without socioeconomic classes.
   2. However, the international perspective of traditional Marxism strikes some thinkers as insensitive to the concerns of the indigenous population in Latin America and the problems of "underdeveloped" areas.

B. Some Latin American thinkers have adapted Marxist ideas to address the specific circumstances of their societies.
   1. José Carlos Mariátegui of Peru contended that the Indians were most likely to bring about revolution in Peru. He called for the return of the land to the Indians and the restoration of the Inca system of distribution.
   2. Fidel Castro's Cuban revolution was Marxist, but it was not the revolution of the urban proletariat that Marx envisaged.
   3. Some national liberation movements (e.g., in Nicaragua) have taken inspiration from Marxism but viewed it as an analytic tool, not an absolute dogma.

C. Liberation philosophy is another recent development.
   1. The aim of this movement is to see reality from the perspective of those on the margins of power and to use philosophy as an instrument for change.
   2. Argentinian thinker Enrique Dussel, a prominent liberation philosopher, challenges the northern nations' claims to having a worldview of universal application. He claims that the northern
nations have used this claim to disguise their pursuit of selfish interests and to justify injustice toward the southern nations.

3. Liberation theology, a related movement from within the Catholic Church, contends that concern for the poor is the central Christian attitude and calls for practices that reflect this.

4. Both movements call for an end to the current disparity between rich and poor and for recognition of the perspective of the marginalized.

Essential Reading:
Gracia, pp. 41–66.

Supplementary Reading:
Schutte, Cultural Identity and Social Liberation in Latin American Thought, chapters 6 and 7.
Valadez, “Pre-Columbian and Modern Philosophical Perspectives in Latin America,” pp. 100–121.

Questions to Consider:
1. Do you think that being charitable makes one’s life better than being greedy?
2. Do you think human behavior can be explained in terms of natural laws? Why or why not?

Lecture Ten
Indian Thought on Supreme Reality

Scope: The Indians of South Asia, unlike most Latin American thinkers, traditionally have not emphasized the ideal social order. Instead, the focus has been on the spiritual aims of the individual human being. Indian thought emphasizes the nature of the self, distinguishing among the individual self (jiva), the true Self that is the same within everyone (Atman), and the fundamental reality of all things, including the self (Brahman). Schools of Indian thought diverge in their interpretations of the relationships among these “selves.” Seeing through illusion, or maya, is a fundamental aim in most schools of traditional Indian thought, with the ultimate goal being liberation, or moksha. Despite the emphasis on individual spirituality, most schools claim that liberation involves overcoming wrong ideas about the self, including the idea that one really is the individual one imagines oneself to be.

Outline
I. Indian philosophers of South Asia distinguish between the everyday world and a more fundamental reality.
A. “Hinduism” is a recent term, applied to a variety of schools of thought.
   1. It is primarily used to distinguish Veda-based religions from Islam.
   2. It originally referred to those on the east side of the River Indus.
   3. “Brahmanism” is a more precise term for classical and pre-classical “Hindu” thought.
B. The schools of thought we will consider take different approaches to the worldview of the Vedas, the authoritative text for Brahmanism.
   1. Originally transmitted orally, the Vedas have four components: hymns, sacrificial formulas, reflections on the rituals, and the Upanishads, or Vedanta (which are philosophical and speculative, focusing on the question “What is ultimate reality?”). The earliest parts of the Vedas date from approximately 1200 B.C.E.
   2. The Vedas were interpreted as indicating a supreme reality underlying appearances.
   3. The Vedas refer to a pantheon of gods that came to be regarded as manifestations of the supreme power, Brahman, and serve as guides that help the mind to understand the supreme principle.
   4. The Vedic tradition holds that all oppositions are only apparent. A single principle underlies and animates everything (both transcendent and immanent).
   5. The same force is seen as the animating principle of the external world and the source of the person asking the question.
II. The nature of the self is a central topic in the Upanishads, or Vedanta, the earliest parts of which were written about 800 B.C.E.

A. The focus is the nature of Atman, the Self that is the same in everyone.
B. Atman is distinguished from the individual living self, called jiva.
   1. Jiva is often translated as “soul.”
   2. Intelligence is understood to reside in a small space in the heart.
   3. Jiva is a subtle fireball in that space.
   4. Jiva provides personal identity. It is the basis of the sense of ego.
   5. Jiva provides the connection among states of consciousness, experiences, and memories.
C. Atman, by contrast, is the Self, which is identical in everyone.
   1. Without Atman, there is no jiva.
   2. Jiva is no different, ultimately, from Atman.
   3. According to some thinkers, jiva reincarnates in a new body after the individual’s death. Death does not in any way disturb Atman.
   4. To focus on jiva as oneself is illusory; this obscures the fact that each of us is Atman.
   5. The central formula of the Vedanta is “That art thou.”
D. But Atman is Brahman, the absolute being of reality.
   1. Because it is Brahman, Atman is everything. It is non-dual and atemporal. It is also the efficient and material cause of everything.
   2. We can think of Atman as the microcosm and Brahman as the macrocosm, but they are identical.
E. According to the Upanishads, Brahman is:
   1. the One reality;
   2. transcendent of “names and forms” (finite individuality);
   3. the essence of everything;
   4. the supreme goal, mystically discoverable inside oneself.

III. Our everyday perspective is deficient.
A. Maya, the term for illusion is applied to our everyday experience.
B. But maya (which stems from ma, “to form” or “to build”) is also the self-transformative power of Brahman. Brahman assumes many masks, which can both obscure and reveal the truth.
C. We come to know what is ultimately real by recognizing Brahman through appearances.

IV. Traditional Indian thought holds that there are four aims in life (purushartha):
A. The first is artha, material possessions (“what can be experienced through the senses”).
B. The second is kama, pleasure and love.

V. In the pursuit of the ends of life, humans go through various stages.
A. The first is that of the student, who learns discipline, the laws of dharma.
B. The second is that of the householder, who is bound by the obligations of marriage and family.
C. The third is that of the forest dweller, the stage at which one begins to withdraw periodically from the pursuits of the world, even though still has family and other social obligations.
D. The fourth is that of the renouncer, who becomes a wandering hermit, completely withdrawing from society.
E. There appears to be a tension among the goals of these different phases.
   1. However, the notion is that after one succeeds at one of the stages, one is ready for something different.
   2. One’s energies shift their focus.

Essential Reading:

Supplementary Reading:
Koller and Koller, Asian Philosophies, chapters 3 and 5.
Krishna, “Socio-political Thought in Classical India.”

Questions to Consider:
1. What would be the implications of believing that the real Self in everyone is the same being?
2. How would you characterize the aims of life?
Lecture Eleven
The Dualism of the Samkhya School

Scope: Like other schools of Indian thought, the Samkhya school attempted to explain the nature of human suffering and the means to overcome it. Samkhya's explanation of suffering makes use of a sharp distinction between consciousness (or purusha) and material nature (prakriti). It is, therefore, a form of dualism, which contends that there are two fundamental principles. To overcome suffering, one must disentangle consciousness from matter and return it to the state of freedom it experienced before becoming associated with matter. Yoga is the means for accomplishing this. If this goal is achieved, all that is left of the self is awareness, no longer personal, no longer conscious of anything other than itself.

Outline

I. Samkhya ("analysis," "measure," or "discrimination") is an ancient dualistic school of Indian thought.

A. Traditionally, Samkhya (or Sankhya) is supposed to have originated in the seventh century B.C.E. with Kapila, about whom little is known. He may have lived at the same time as the authors of the Upanishads, with an alternative message.
   1. Samkhya is a very ancient school with roots in the thought of India's original inhabitants (the Dravidians). Heinrich Zimmer has argued that it existed before the arrival of the Aryans on the Indian sub-continent in the second millennium B.C.E.
   2. Probably the earliest systematic texts of Samkhya appeared between the fourth century B.C.E. and the first century C.E. The earliest of these, however, have not survived.
   3. Ishvarakrishna (fifth century C.E.) is the author of what is considered the fundamental surviving Samkhya text.

B. What we do know is that later schools of Indian thought retained aspects of the Samkhya system.

C. Samkhya offers an account of reality that serves as a basis for intricate psychological diagnoses. (We might compare Samkhya's system of categories to Freud's ego, id, and superego.)

D. According to the Samkhya system, there are two types of being, consciousness (purusha) and nature (the material world, or prakriti).
   1. There are many conscious beings but only a single nature.
   2. Both are real, contrary to Vedantic thinking.
   3. The challenge for human beings is to learn to recognize the difference between the two.

E. The goal is to disentangle purusha from prakriti, to free purusha.

II. The "self" as a substantial entity comes about through the interface of a purusha and prakriti.

A. Purusha is not self-consciousness.
   1. It has no relations, no characteristics, no power, and no responsiveness.
   2. It is free, without beginning or end.
   3. Although purusha is not individual self-consciousness, each individual has its own purusha.

B. Everything is already in prakriti, but the purusha causes these effects to be manifest.
   1. When purusha and prakriti are joined, purusha is like a light penetrating a crystal, or like heat pervading something.
   2. Such a "self" (purusha conjoined with prakriti) is bound in the round of transmigration from life to life.

C. Nature (prakriti) is one thing, but it is complex. It is manifested under three aspects (gunas).
   1. According to Samkhya philosophy, all nature is comprised of three strands (gunas): sattva (light, purity, and intelligence); rajas (passion and activity); and tamas (darkness and inertia).
   2. The true self of the human person is evident through the preponderance of the sattva-guna, "lightness."
   3. The Bhagavad-Gita, an epic poem that summarizes the ethics of the Brahmanic tradition, accepts this analysis of the natural world in terms of the gunas. (We will discuss the Bhagavad-Gita in a subsequent lecture.)

III. The principles involved in making up the human being occur in several components, all of which are products of prakriti.

A. The first component of the human person is the impersonal intellect or judgment (buddhi).
   1. Its function is awareness.
   2. It is not controlled by our conscious minds, although it directs our conscious minds.
   3. Buddhi is what acts spontaneously within us. When a thought occurs in our conscious minds, it was prompted by the buddhi.

B. The second component is the ego (ahamkara), which claims particular activities as its own. It emerges from the buddhi.

C. The five subtle elements, generic potentials for sense impressions, are generated from the ego. Each of these has the capacity to respond to stimuli associated with the particular senses.
D. The mind (manas), understood as the ordinary intellect or thinking faculty, is also generated from the ego and interacts with the sense functions and motor functions.

E. The conjunction of all of the above makes up the “subtle body.”
   1. The subtle body is an alter ego, which appears in sleep, dreams, astral experiences, yogic states, and the unconscious.
   2. The subtle body is what survives death (of the gross body) and is reincarnated.

F. The subtle elements produce the gross elements, the physical properties of the external world. (In other words, it is only because we have general potentials to experience the stimuli associated with particular senses that we can encounter the gross elements in the external world.)

IV. Yoga is a spiritual discipline, and it is often taken to be the practical correlate of the Samkhya school.
   A. This association is attributed to Patanjali, the compiler of one of the earliest texts on yoga, who assumes much of the account of the Samkhya school. However, the two differ somewhat.
   B. Patanjali’s Yoga-sutra makes reference to God, which Samkhya does not.
   C. Although Samkhya considers knowledge the only route to liberation, yoga is a system of practices of self-discipline that have liberation as their aim.

V. According to the Yoga-sutra, the aim of yoga is to still the mind.
   A. Yoga enables one to recognize that nothing affects or damages the purusha. It is completely serene.
   B. Yoga involves suppression of the mental activities that interfere with insight as a means of getting rid of klesas (hindrances). These include:
      1. ignorance (avidya—naive consciousness), which involves the false belief that this world can yield unending happiness;
      2. ego;
      3. attachment;
      4. hatred or repugnance;
      5. the will to live (clinging to life).

VI. The ultimate goal is the dissolution of the personality and the experience of the supreme isolation of the purusha.
   A. What is left, the pure purusha, is “the witness,” an onlooker.
   B. Its state is supreme isolation and omniscience.
   C. If the goal is attained, the gross and subtle bodies continue to live.
      1. But they wind down (like a potter’s wheel, after the impulses turning it have stopped).
      2. There are no future lives.

3. At death, the subtle and gross bodies dissolve.

Essential Reading:

Supplementary Reading:
Koller and Koller, Asian Philosophies, chapter 6.
Zimmer, Philosophies of India, pp. 280–332.

Questions to Consider:
1. What considerations lend support to the view that consciousness is a different kind of thing than material nature? What considerations seem to cast doubt on this position?
2. Do you think that stilling the mind is a desirable goal?
Lecture Twelve
Vedic Thought and Monism

Scope: The Vedas are ancient Indian scriptures, parts of which date from 1200–900 B.C.E. Many traditional Hindu schools of thought focus on interpreting the Vedas, particularly the speculative philosophical section called the Upanishads (or Vedanta). Although the Vedas describe a pantheon of gods, Vedic thought holds that they are all manifestations of a single supreme power, called Brahman. Brahman is understood as the single principle that animates everything in the apparent world. Accordingly, Vedic thought is monistic, meaning that it seeks a fundamental unity as the basis for the many kinds of things in the phenomenal world. A corollary to this position, held by the influential Advaita Vedanta school, is that the phenomenal world is illusory. The spiritual goal is to become aware of oneself as one with Brahman. This awareness is liberating. With it, the phenomenal world vanishes.

Outline

I. As a dualistic system, Samkhya differs from Vedic schools.
   A. This school has a dualistic metaphysics of “conscious beings” apart from nature.
   B. Both of these kinds of things are real, according to Samkhya. Samkhya is therefore considered a “realist” school.
   C. One difficulty with dualistic systems is that of explaining how the two kinds of things operate together (the same problem that arises for Cartesian dualism).
      1. It isn’t clear how prakriti can reflect consciousness.
      2. The satvaguna is supposed to be capable of transparently mirroring consciousness.
      3. But if purusa and prakriti are radically different kinds of things, it isn’t clear how this happens.

II. The approach of Advaita Vedanta (Non-Dual Vedanta) contrasts with that of Samkhya. Advaita Vedanta claims that there is only one thing.
   A. Advaita Vedanta is a prominent school of classical Indian philosophy, prominently advocated by Shankara (ca. 800 C.E.).
      1. Advaita literally means “non-dualism.”
      2. Advaita Vedanta is a form of spiritual monism, holding that there is only one thing, which is spiritual.
      3. This school is sometimes called “illusionism” because of its claim that the apparent diversity we observe in the world is illusory.

B. Advaita Vedanta emphasizes the passages in the Upanishads that claim that “All is Brahman.”
   1. Advaita Vedanta interprets this statement to mean that things as distinct from Brahman are unreal (maya).
   2. This includes the seemingly individual consciousness or self.
   3. The spiritual goal is to recognize one’s unity with Atman/Brahman.
   4. One can achieve this only through direct personal experience.
   5. Meditation and study of the Upanishads are recommended by various Vedantins as routes that can lead to recollection of our true selves.

III. Recollection of the true self involves the elimination of the illusion that there is a world distinct from Brahman.
   A. The Self, the only reality, is supreme silence.
   B. But what is the status of the world of our perception?
   C. Shankara’s solution is to claim that the world we experience is “real” in that it is an appearance of the single reality, or Brahman, but it is not ultimately real.
   D. Our ordinary experience of the world distorts our awareness of the reality it manifests.
      1. The world as we experience it changes.
      2. True reality, or Brahman, however, does not change.
      3. Change is merely apparent.
   E. The world has a status akin to that of a dream or an optical illusion.

IV. Words cannot convey the nature of Brahman.
   A. Words help us to understand things by providing distinct categories for purposes of classification.
   B. Advaita Vedanta, however, claims that all distinctions are ultimately maya.
   C. Shankara, like many mystics in various traditions, adopts a via negativa (negative way) in his discussions of Brahman. He speaks in terms of what Brahman is not (for example, not-dual), to make room for insight that transcends linguistic categories.

V. Advaita Vedanta has different philosophical challenges than those faced by dualistic accounts like that of the Samkhya school.
   A. The Upanishads claim that the world is produced out of Brahman. Doesn’t this imply that there is something else besides Brahman?
   B. The Advaitans claim that strictly speaking, Brahman does not “cause” the world. Causal connections exist only as part of the structure of the everyday world.
      1. Advaita Vedanta acknowledges the existence of such connections relative to the empirical world.

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2. However, the entire world is, on a more profound level, an illusion.
C. We cannot know Brahman through theoretical investigations, which connect things by means of causality.
D. However, we can know Brahman through immediate experience.
   1. Knowledge of Brahman is already present within us.
   2. Our ordinary self-awareness is immediate. It does not separate subject and object.
   3. The true self is actually the precondition of our everyday awareness. This is why self-awareness is immediate.

VI. Samkhya and Advaita Vedanta do not focus on God. Some Brahmanistic thinkers, however, are more explicitly theistic.
A. Classic Indian views that God is the divine reality usually claim to be grounded in teachings of the Bhagavad Gita and various Upanishads.
B. Theistic accounts have some features of Samkhya and some features of Advaita Vedanta: Creation, which is real, is a manifestation of God.
C. God is a personification of Brahman, called Ishvara.
D. The individual self is in one sense identical and in another, distinct from God.
E. Theistic accounts also accept the notion of avatars (avatara), incarnations of divine beings in human forms.
F. Other schools of Indian thought are not theistic. The Carvaka school, for example, believes that jiva is entirely material; every aspect of the human being comes to an end in death.

**Supplementary Reading:**

**Questions to Consider:**
1. Can you think of cases in which a *via negativa* is used in Western thought, particularly Western religious thought?
2. In what way is the Advaitin reasoning about the unchanging nature of Brahman reminiscent of ancient Greek thought?

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**Timeline**

**B.C.E.**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Event</th>
<th>Location/Region</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>30,000</td>
<td>Cave paintings</td>
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<tr>
<td>10,000</td>
<td>Emergence of agricultural societies</td>
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<tr>
<td>ca. 3000</td>
<td>Construction of megalithic tombs, such as New Grange in the Boyne Valley of Ireland</td>
<td>EUROPE</td>
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<tr>
<td>2620–2480</td>
<td>Great Pyramids built in Egypt</td>
<td>AFRICA</td>
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<tr>
<td>ca. 2000</td>
<td>Erection of Stonehenge solar observatory</td>
<td>EUROPE</td>
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<tr>
<td>ca. 1700–1100</td>
<td>Shang Dynasty</td>
<td>CHINA</td>
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<tr>
<td>ca. 1600</td>
<td>Hammurabi’s Code established in Babylon</td>
<td>MIDDLE EAST</td>
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<tr>
<td>1500–900</td>
<td>Rise of Olmec civilization in Mesoamerica</td>
<td>THE AMERICAS</td>
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<tr>
<td>1367–1350</td>
<td>Pharaoh Amenhotep IV (Akhenaton) of Egypt adopted a new religion, involving worship of a universal god, Aton, the sun</td>
<td>AFRICA</td>
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<tr>
<td>1200–900</td>
<td><em>Rig Veda</em> written (except the tenth book)</td>
<td>INDIA</td>
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<tr>
<td>1050–256</td>
<td>Zhou (Chou) Dynasty, the period that Confucius considered a Golden Age</td>
<td>CHINA</td>
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<tr>
<td>ca. 1000</td>
<td>Hebrew Decalogue established</td>
<td>MIDDLE EAST</td>
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<tr>
<td>700–300</td>
<td>Early <em>Upanishads</em> written</td>
<td>INDIA</td>
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<tr>
<td>600s</td>
<td>Legendary beginning of Samkhya system by Kapila</td>
<td>INDIA</td>
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<tr>
<td>400s–300s</td>
<td>Beginning of Buddhism</td>
<td>INDIA</td>
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<tr>
<td>400s–200s</td>
<td>The Hundred Schools period—the flourishing of many schools of Chinese thought, including Mohism, Confucianism, and Daoism, among others</td>
<td>CHINA</td>
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<tr>
<td>403–221</td>
<td>Warring States Period, the development of Confucianism</td>
<td>CHINA</td>
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<td>Date</td>
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<tr>
<td>300-1500 C.E.</td>
<td>Middle and late <em>Upanishads</em> written</td>
<td>INDIA</td>
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<tr>
<td>221-206</td>
<td>Dynasty of Qin Shi Wangdi (Ch'in Shih Huangdi) (d. ca. 210 B.C.E.), the first</td>
<td>CHINA</td>
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<td>Emperor of China, who unified the nation and standardized writing and currency</td>
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<td>200</td>
<td>Earliest part of the <em>Bhagavad Gita</em></td>
<td>INDIA</td>
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<tr>
<td>200-100 C.E.</td>
<td>Theravada and Mahayana Buddhism diverge</td>
<td>INDIA</td>
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<tr>
<td>ca. 5</td>
<td>Birth of Jesus Christ</td>
<td>MIDDLE EAST</td>
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<tr>
<td>1st century C.E.</td>
<td>Buddhism arrives in China</td>
<td>CHINA</td>
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<tr>
<td>ca. 150</td>
<td>Nagarjuna's &quot;Averting the Arguments&quot; written</td>
<td>INDIA</td>
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<tr>
<td>200-900</td>
<td>The era of Mayan domination of Mesoamerica</td>
<td>THE AMERICAS</td>
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<tr>
<td>300-400</td>
<td>Final redaction of the <em>Yoga-sutra</em> (attributed to Patanjali)</td>
<td>INDIA</td>
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<td>400</td>
<td>Latest part of the <em>Bhagavad Gita</em> (INDIA);</td>
<td>INDIA</td>
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<td></td>
<td>high point of Teotihuacan, the first true capital of Mexico, when it had a population</td>
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<td></td>
<td>of over 200,000 people</td>
<td>THE AMERICAS</td>
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<tr>
<td>500s</td>
<td>Buddhism arrives in Japan</td>
<td>JAPAN</td>
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<td>Muhammad's <em>hijrah</em> (flight) from Mecca to Medina, the historical beginning of Islam</td>
<td>MIDDLE EAST</td>
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<tr>
<td>ca. 700–750</td>
<td>Advaita Vedanta developed by Shankara</td>
<td>INDIA</td>
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<tr>
<td>794-1185</td>
<td>Heian period</td>
<td>JAPAN</td>
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<tr>
<td>830-930</td>
<td>Dissolution of the Mayan civilization</td>
<td>THE AMERICAS</td>
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<tr>
<td>845</td>
<td>Suppression of Buddhism in China</td>
<td>CHINA</td>
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<tr>
<td>ca. 1000</td>
<td>Mahmud of Ghazni invades Indian subcontinent, bringing Islamic rule</td>
<td>INDIA</td>
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<tr>
<td>ca. 1000</td>
<td><em>Pillowbook of Sei Shonagon</em> written</td>
<td>JAPAN</td>
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<td></td>
<td><strong>early 1100s</strong></td>
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<td></td>
<td>Aztecs arrive in the Valley of Mexico</td>
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<td></td>
<td><strong>1101</strong></td>
<td>AMERICAS</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Beginning of Rinzai sect of Ch'an/Zen Buddhism</td>
<td>JAPAN</td>
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<tr>
<td>1185–1333</td>
<td>Kamakura Period and the beginning of Shogun rule; revitalization of Buddhism in Japan;</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>the Rinzai school of Zen arrives from China</td>
<td>JAPAN</td>
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<tr>
<td>1300s</td>
<td>Incas begin to expand into neighboring territory</td>
<td>THE</td>
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<td></td>
<td><strong>AMERICAS</strong></td>
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<tr>
<td>1325</td>
<td>Aztecs found city of Tenochtitlan</td>
<td>THE</td>
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<td><strong>AMERICAS</strong></td>
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<tr>
<td>1333–1568</td>
<td>Muromachi Period, a period of warfare and further rule by the shogunate</td>
<td>JAPAN</td>
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<tr>
<td>1375–1527</td>
<td>Italian Renaissance</td>
<td>EUROPE</td>
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<tr>
<td>1400s</td>
<td>European voyages of exploration; beginning of colonialism in Africa</td>
<td>AFRICA;</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Incas develop huge empire</td>
<td>THE</td>
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<td><strong>AMERICAS</strong></td>
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<tr>
<td>1424</td>
<td>General Tilcaael has Aztec history rewritten to support a militaristic view of reality</td>
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<td><strong>AMERICAS</strong></td>
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<tr>
<td>1492</td>
<td>Columbus reaches America</td>
<td>THE</td>
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<td></td>
<td><strong>AMERICAS</strong></td>
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<tr>
<td>Late 1400s</td>
<td>The Renaissance begins</td>
<td>EUROPE</td>
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<tr>
<td>1500s–1600s</td>
<td>Scientific revolution</td>
<td>EUROPE</td>
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<td>1500</td>
<td>Climax of Aztec conquest of Mexico</td>
<td>THE</td>
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<td><strong>AMERICAS</strong></td>
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<tr>
<td>1517</td>
<td>Martin Luther nails his <em>Ninety-five Theses</em> criticizing the Church on the door of the</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Wittenberg Cathedral, the first step toward precipitating the Protestant Reformation</td>
<td>EUROPE</td>
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<tr>
<td>1519</td>
<td>Hernando Cortés enters the Aztec capital, Tenochtitlan</td>
<td>THE</td>
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<td><strong>AMERICAS</strong></td>
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<tr>
<td>1521</td>
<td>Cortés defeats the Aztecs and names their empire &quot;New Spain&quot;</td>
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<td><strong>AMERICAS</strong></td>
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</tbody>
</table>
1532..............................Francisco Pizarro's invasion of the Inca Empire [THE AMERICAS]
1543..............................Portuguese arrive in Japan [JAPAN];
publication of Copernicus's *On the Revolutions of the Heavenly Spheres*
[EUROPE]
1555..............................Peace of Augsburg establishes a religious
division of European Christendom
[EUROPE]
1587..............................Catholic missionaries banned from Japan
[JAPAN]
1600–1686......................Tokugawa (Edo) Period, a time when the
arts of kabuki theater, puppet theater, and
ukiyo prints flourished [JAPAN]
1635..............................Ban on Japanese travel abroad [JAPAN]
1829–1842......................Opium War between England and China,
which resulted in Chinese defeat [CHINA]
1853..............................Perry arrives in Japan [JAPAN]
1884..............................Berlin conference dividing Africa among
European nations [AFRICA]
1919..............................May Fourth protest by students against
European interference in Chinese affairs
[CHINA]
1949..............................People's Republic of China founded
[CHINA]
1950s–1960s.....................African nations declare independence from
European rule [AFRICA]

Glossary

**advaita:** (Sanskrit) non-dual.

**Advaita Vedanta:** a monistic school of Brahmanic thought that asserts that only
Brahman exists.

**anatman:** (Sanskrit) the Buddhist doctrine that there is no substantial self.

**anitya:** (Sanskrit) the Buddhist doctrine that everything is impermanent.

**apeiron:** the indefinite, according to pre-Socratic philosopher Anaximander, and
the basic, unchanging substance of which other, changing things are made.

**arhat:** (Sanskrit) one whose attainments are worthy of nirvana. This is the
spiritual goal, according to Theravada Buddhism.

**artha:** (Sanskrit) literally, what can be perceived through the senses. As one of
the aims of life, according to traditional Indian thought, it refers to material
possessions.

**àshe:** (Yoruba) spiritual power to make things happen, originating in the
Supreme God but present in all natural beings and entities.

**asramas:** (Sanskrit) the four stages of the human life cycle.

**Atman:** (Sanskrit) the supreme Self, which is identical in everyone.

**avidya:** (Sanskrit) ignorance. This term is used in both Brahmanism and
Buddhism, both of which consider ignorance a primary spiritual obstacle.

**Bhagavad Gita:** the “Song of the Blessed Lord,” a segment of the *Mahabharata,*
an Indian epic that was composed around 200 B.C.E. Most of the *Bhagavad Gita*
is presented in the voice of Krishna, an avatar of Vishnu who appears as the
charioteer of Arjuna, a central character in the *Mahabharata*.

**bhakti:** (Sanskrit) devotion. Krishna, in the *Bhagavad Gita,* advocates a spirit of
devotion to a deity, specifically the deity Vishnu, whom he identifies with
Brahman.

**bodhisattva:** (Sanskrit) a person who has reached enlightenment but forgoes final
nirvana (which would extinguish his or her personality) to remain in the world to
help others attain enlightenment. This is the spiritual goal, according to
Mayahana Buddhism.

**Brahman:** (Sanskrit) the absolute being of reality; the One.

**Brahmanism:** classical and pre-classical religion of the Indian subcontinent.

**Buddha:** the enlightened one. This term is used, in particular, to refer to
Siddhartha Gautama, the founder of Buddhism. Mahayanists also use it
to refer to other enlightened beings throughout history.
Buddha-nature: the metaphysical substratum that is the only reality, supporting apparent phenomenon. The Buddha-nature is also referred to as the “thusness” and “the Void.”

buddhi: (Sanskrit) the impersonal intellect that is our faculty of awareness, according to the Sankhya school.
calmeceae: (Maya) the schools of higher learning, attended by those who would become nobles or priests, run by the lamaeinites.

Carvaka: (Sanskrit) a school of Indian thought that was materialistic and skeptical. The Carvaka thinkers insisted that the material world was the only reality and denied that any aspect of the person survived death.
categorical imperative: according to Immanuel Kant, a statement expressing the entirety of the moral law. Kant’s various formulations of the categorical imperative serve as means for testing the moral appropriateness of a contemplated action.

chakras: (Sanskrit) the seven psychic centers of the physical body, through which the subtle body works.

Chan Buddhism: one of the major Chinese sects of Buddhism that continued beyond the persecution of Buddhism in 845 C.E. The southern school of this sect, which claimed that enlightenment could be sudden, spread to Japan, where it developed as Zen Buddhism.

cheng ming: (Chinese) the attunement of names. This Confucian notion means that words (including official titles) should correspond to realities.
cogito: (Latin) “I think,” the opening word of Descartes’s argument “I think, therefore I am.” The word cogito is used as a summary term for the entire argument.

conventional truth: according to the Buddhist two-truths doctrine, defended by Nagarjuna, the truth relative to the way we experience things. Conventional truth is not, however, truth in an absolute sense.
culturalism: the view that philosophy is relative to the social and historical context in which it is produced.

Dao: (Chinese) the “Way,” a term used to mean different things by different schools. The Daoists use the term to refer to the fundamental flow of nature and all things in it. The Confucians use the term to refer to the life of virtue.

Daoism: school of Chinese thought that aims at a return to oneness with nature through a stance of receptivity and the elimination of preconceptions.
determinism: the view that human life is shaped by forces that are not controlled by human beings. This view denies or restricts the role of human freedom in controlling a person’s destiny.

dharmas: (Sanskrit) in Buddhist thought, the brief aggregates of causes and effects that create impressions of independently existing “things.”
dualism: the view that there are two fundamental substances or principles that give form to reality or some aspect of reality.
dukkha: (Sanskrit) trouble, pain, or suffering, including emotional and psychological distress. The Buddha uses this term to articulate the character of life in the First Noble Truth.

temples: See sunyata.

epistemology: the study of the grounds of knowledge and the means for attaining it.

essence: according to Aristotle, the basic structure that makes a particular thing an instance of a particular kind.

ethnosophistry: a term used, sometimes disparagingly, to refer to efforts to construct systematic philosophical accounts of the often implicit worldviews of a society, most often by someone outside the society.

Forms: according to Plato, the ultimate reality, the prototypes that things in the material world imperfectly copy.

Four Noble Truths: the central insights of Buddhism, concerned with the nature of suffering and the means to overcome it.

guna: (Sanskrit) literally, strand. The three gunas are the three aspects that, in various combinations, compose the things of material reality (prakriti). The gunas are also the aspects that combine to form human psychological life.

henotheism: the belief that a single God appears in various divine forms.

Hinduism: initially a geographical term to refer to those who lived East of the Ganges River in Pakistan. This term refers generally to Brahmanic (non-Islamic) schools of Indian thought.

Hua-yen Buddhism: one of the three major philosophical schools of Chinese Buddhism. It did not survive the persecution of 845 C.E.

idealism: the position that the world as we experience it is produced or structured by the mind.

Thiyotl: (Nahuatl) the life force that gave bravery and other dispositions, including happiness, according to Aztec belief. It resided in the liver, and it made its possessor attractive to others.
Ikebana: (Japanese) the art of flower arranging.

illusionism: the position that what we normally experience is illusory.

interdependent arising: (in Sanskrit, pratityasamutpad) the Buddhist doctrine that every thing exists only relative to other things. Only the whole exists; the “parts” have no independent reality.

jīva: (Sanskrit) the individual self, the basis for personal identity and the connection between conscious states and memories.

kāma: (Sanskrit) pleasure and love. According to traditional Indian thought, this is the second of the four aims of life (the purusharthas).

karma: (Sanskrit) literally, action. Karma refers to the ongoing tendencies that are occasioned by actions, both psychological dispositions and tendencies to behave in certain ways. This idea is central in both Brahmanism and Buddhism.

karma-yoga: (Sanskrit) the yoga of selfless action, recommended by Krishna to Arjuna in the Bhagavad Gīta.

klesas: (Sanskrit) afflictions, or hindrances to spiritual liberation, that result from bad action.

koans: (Japan) a verbal puzzle or logical conundrum, used in the Rinzai school of Zen Buddhism to startle the practitioner into sudden enlightenment.

Kyoto School: twentieth-century school of Japanese thought that drew from Western thought as well as its own tradition. Nishida Kitaro and Nishitani Keiji were among its prominent members.

lì: (Chinese) ritual action, one of the central virtues of Confucianism.

liberation philosophy: a Latin American philosophical movement in recent decades that urges attention to the perspective of the marginalized and the development of a more just approach to the relationship between the nations of the northern hemisphere and those of the southern hemisphere.

liberation theology: a movement in the Catholic Church, begun in Latin America, that interprets the essence of Christianity as being a “preferential option for the poor.” This involves the attempt to appreciate the perspective of those who are impoverished, a commitment to working to enhance their well-being, and a “poverty of spirit,” a detachment from obsession with wealth and material goods.

Madhyamika: the Buddhist “School of the Middle Way,” founded by Nagarjuna.

Mahābhārata: an Indian epic poem that is part of the Smṛiti (in Brahmanism, authoritative works but secondary to the Vedas).

Mahayana Buddhism: the form of Buddhist thought that is dominant in East Asia. Mahayana Buddhism acknowledges many Buddhas through history, emphasizes the Buddha’s compassionate example, and considers enlightenment available to the laity, as well as to those who live in monasteries and convents.

malla:nî: (Nahuatl) the spiral-shaped channels through which spiritual forces move among the three planes of reality (the celestial plane, the terrestrial plane, and the underworld).

manas: (Sanskrit) the mind, a component of the psychic sense, according to the Samkhya school.

Marxism: philosophical system developed by Karl Marx. Marxism is materialistic, contending that human history is ultimately determined by the power relations involved in the control of the means of production of the material necessities of human life. According to Marx, history unfolds as a consequence of class conflicts, which are inevitable. The ultimate revolution will occur when the proletariat (the working class) rebels against the capitalist owners of the means of production. This revolution will result in the overthrow of capitalism and the institution of a society without socioeconomic classes.

māyā: (Sanskrit) illusion, which is understood in Brahmanism to encompass all of phenomenal reality. At the same time, this illusory reality is identified with the self-transformative power of Brahman.

Mohism: (China) The school of thought founded by Mozi (Mo Tzu). Mozi defended the idea of universal love, without differentiating between those close to one and those more distant. Mozi also contended that moral choices should be made on the basis of what course of action will yield the best results.

moksha: (Sanskrit) spiritual release. This occurs when one sees through illusion to ultimate reality.

monism: the view that there is one fundamental substance or principle that gives form to reality or some aspect of reality.

mukti: (Sanskrit) liberation.

Natyasastras: (Sanskrit) compendia analyzing the performance arts and the emotions conveyed by means of them.

negritude: a mode of apprehending reality that is emotional and participatory, claimed to be characteristic of Africans and their descendents by Léopold Sédar Senghor and other members of the “negritude movement” of the 1930s.

nihilism: the absence or collapse of values.

nirvana: (Sanskrit) literally, extinction. In Buddhism, nirvāna is the state in which selfish craving is extinguished. This state is achieved by one who is enlightened, and it occasions an end to the cycle of rebirth.
no-self doctrine: the Buddhist doctrine that denies that there is a substantial self, distinct from the interconnected whole.

noumenal world: the world as it is in itself, independent of the knowing mind, according to Immanuel Kant’s philosophy.

Olmec: early civilization of the Mesoamerican region. Some believe that the Olmecs were the originators of the complex calendar system that was later modified by the Maya and other peoples of the region.

panentheism: the belief that a single spirit is manifest in each thing.

pantheism: the belief that God is not distinct from the universe.

particularism, ethical: the view that appropriate ethical behavior depends on the particular circumstances.

pensadores: (Spanish) thinkers. This term is used in reference to the public intellectuals of Latin America who reflect mainly on social and political issues.

phenomenal world: the world as it is experienced.

positivism: a philosophical movement developed by Auguste Comte that asserted that human behavior is governed by natural laws and that society should be organized on the basis of these laws.

prakriti: (Sanskrit) nature, the material world, according to the Samkhya school of Indian thought.

purusha: (Sanskrit) According to the Samkhya school of Indian thought, consciousness. There are as many purushas as there are conscious beings.

purusharthas: (Sanskrit) the four aims of life, according to traditional Indian thought.

qi (ch'i): (Chinese) configured energy, the energy that makes up all things in the universe.

rajas: (Sanskrit) passion and activity. Rajas is one of the three gunas, the three aspects of reality, according to the Samkhya school and other schools of Indian thought.

realism: the view that what we experience, or some efficient cause of what we experience, has existence independent of the mind.

ren (jen): (Chinese) humanity, benevolence.

Rinzai Buddhism: A school of Chan Buddhism, begun in China and committed to the idea of sudden enlightenment. In Japan, this sect particularly emphasizes startling techniques for breaking through practitioners’ preconceptions, such as the use of koans and spontaneous fighting between master and disciple.

Samkhya: (Sanskrit). Literally, “analysis” or “discrimination.” Samkhya is the name of an early, dualistic school of Indian thought that analyzed human psychology. The spiritual aim for human beings, according to this school, is the dissociation of consciousness from matter.

samsara: (Sanskrit) the chain of causation, which continues through the cycle of rebirth, according to Buddhist doctrine.

samskaras: (Sanskrit) residues left in the unconscious mind as a consequence of actions.

sattva: (Sanskrit) light, purity, and intelligence. Sattva is one of the three gunas, the three aspects of reality, according to the Samkhya school and other schools of Indian thought.

Scholasticism: a medieval philosophical movement in Europe, grounded in Aristotle’s thought and devoted to using reason to enhance human understanding of Christian revelation.

Shinto: (Japan) the traditional religion of Japan, which attributes divinity to particular locations and natural objects.

skepticism: a stance of systematic doubt; alternatively, the conclusion that we do not have true knowledge.

Smriti: (Sanskrit) literally, “recollected.” The Smriti are authoritative in Brahmanic thought, but their authority is secondary to that of the Vedas. Among the Smriti are the epics the Mahabharata and the Ramayana.

Soto: one of the two major schools of Zen Buddhism. The Soto school accepts the idea of gradual enlightenment. (Rinzai, the other major school, accepts the idea of sudden enlightenment.)

Stoicism: a school of Hellenistic thought that sought to minimize emotional attachments and to direct one’s life entirely on the basis of reason.

subtle body: according to the Samkhya school, this is the alter ego that one can experience in dreams and mystical experiences. It is made up of the psychic sense in combination with the “trace elements” (sound, touch, form-color, taste, and smell). The subtle body survives death.

sunya\text{t}: (Sanskrit) emptiness. Sunyata is an important concept in Buddhism. It refers to the fundamental reality on which all apparent “things” rest. The Mahayana school of Buddhism considers enlightenment to involve awareness that only this “emptiness” is real and that seeming “things” are illusory.

tamas: (Sanskrit) darkness and inertia. Tamas is one of the three gunas, the three aspects of reality, according to the Samkhya school and other schools of Indian thought.
taotie: monstrous mask motif that appears on bronzes of the Shang Dynasty in China, suggesting a being coming into form.

teyotli: (NahuaI) the life force that provides emotion, memory, and knowledge, residing in the heart, according to Aztec belief.

Theravada Buddhism: the dominant form of Buddhism in southern Asia. Theravada Buddhists focus on the uniqueness of the historical Buddha and contend that monastic life is virtually essential for attaining enlightenment.

thusness: in Buddhist thought, the metaphysical substratum that is the reality underlying the apparent world that we experience, also known as “the Void” and “the Buddha-nature.”

Tiantai Buddhism: one of the three major philosophical schools of Chinese Buddhism. It did not survive the persecution of 845 C.E.

tlamatiname: (Nahuatl) literally, the “knowers of things.” The tlamatiname were the poets/philosophers of the Aztecs who preserved and taught the higher wisdom of the Aztec people.

tonati: (Nahuatl) the animating life force, residing in the head, according to Aztec belief.

two-truths doctrine: Nagarjuna’s doctrine that there is a place for “conventional truth,” the “truth” about what we experience, even though this “truth” does not reflect fundamental reality.

universalism: the view that philosophy uses universal reason to establish the validity of its principles and that this endeavor is not relative to particular social or historical circumstances.

Upanishads: the most recent of the four components of the Vedas, consisting of philosophical and speculative reflections.

utilitarianism: the position that the moral test of contemplated actions should be the principle of utility, which holds that one should promote the greatest good for the greatest number.

Vedanta: (Sanskrit) alternative term for the Upanishads.

Vedanta: (Sanskrit) those who follow the Vedas. The term is sometimes used as a shortened way of referring to those who follow Advaita Vedanta.

Vedas: a body of works dating from as early as 1200 B.C.E. that are the central scriptures of Brahmanism.

Void, the: the emptiness of things (sunyata). According to Nagarjuna, the ultimate truth.

Wakan Tank: (Lakota) the Great Spirit.

wicasa wakan: (Lakota) shaman, or holy man.

wu-wei: (Chinese) non-action, where action is understood to involve assertion.

xiao: (Chinese) filial piety, a central virtue according to Confucius.

yi: (Chinese) appropriateness, a central virtue of Confucianism.

yin and yang: (Chinese) literally, “the sunny side” and “the shaded side.” Yin and yang stand for any pair of opposites. Chinese thought emphasizes the mutual dependence of all opposites and the gradual transformation of opposites into each other, principles well illustrated by the relationship between “the sunny side” and “the shaded side.”

yoga: (Sanskrit) a classical school of Indian thought; also one of several methods of (often ascetic) spiritual discipline. Both have the aim of spiritual liberation.

Yoga-sutra: (Sanskrit) an aphoristic text attributed to Patanjali that summarizes the practices of yoga.

Zen Buddhism: Chan Buddhism as it developed in Japan.

ziran: (Chinese) spontaneity, or “self-so-ing” (i.e., being exactly as one is), a term for the ideal way of being, according to the Daoists.
Biographical Notes

Historical Figures

Anaximander (610–545 B.C.E.). Pre-Socratic philosopher who claimed that apeiron, the indefinite, which endures, was the fundamental substance underlying apparent, changing things.

Anaximenes (fl. 550 B.C.E.). Pre-Socratic philosopher who claimed that air is the fundamental substance and that other things are formed by means of the expansion and contraction of air.

Aristotle (384–322 B.C.E.). Ancient Greek philosopher. Although a student of Plato, he challenged some of Plato's ideas. In particular, Aristotle denied that there was a transcendent world of Forms, arguing instead that the world is ordered according to natural kinds, each of which possesses an essential structure.

Augustine (345–430 C.E.). Early Christian philosopher and bishop of Hippo, in northern Africa. Augustine was particularly concerned to offer an explanation of how evil can exist in a world created by a good God. He also wrote one of the earliest autobiographies in the Western tradition, The Confessions, which chronicles the steps that led him to convert to Christianity.

Black Elk (1863–1950). Lakota elder whose religious teachings were recorded in literary form. They represent an early literary statement of an environmental ethic.

Bodhidharma (d. 520 C.E.). According to Zen tradition, the patriarch who brought Chan Buddhism to China.

Bondy, Augusto Salazar (1927–1974). Peruvian thinker whose work straddled hermeneutics, the analytical tradition, and certain Marxist ideas. Bondy was concerned with the issue of the cultural identity of Latin American philosophy. He was a culturalist, who insisted that philosophy always reflects the concrete circumstances of those who develop it, and that Latin America should develop a non-derivative philosophical tradition that dealt with the real experiences of Latin America.

Caso, Antonio (1883–1946). Anti positivistic Mexican philosopher who defended the notion that charitable action is the freest and most fulfilling action possible for human beings. Caso also defended the importance of aesthetic creativity, which expressed human freedom and was intrinsically valuable, not determined by ulterior motives.

Comte, Auguste (1793–1857). French philosopher who founded the movement called "positivism," which aimed to systematize scientific laws of human behavior and construct social institutions on the basis of these laws.

Confucius (Kong Fu Zi, or K'ung Fu Tzu) (551–479 B.C.E.). Ancient Chinese philosopher whose influence extends throughout East Asia. Confucius advocated moral self-cultivation as the way to become an exemplary person, the observance of traditional rituals, and rulership by moral example.

Copernicus, Nicholas (1473–1543). Renaissance scientist who revolutionized scientific thought with his defense of the claim that the sun, not the earth, is the center of the world.

Democritus (460–370 B.C.E.). Ancient Greek philosopher who proposed that observable things were composed of atoms, tiny particles that could not be further subdivided.

Descartes, René (1596–1650). French philosopher who defended reason as the means to certain knowledge. He is particularly famous for his proof "I think, therefore I am" (the cogito) and his differentiation between mind and body as distinct kinds of substances.

Deustua, Alejandro Octavio (1849–1945). Peruvian philosopher and educator best known for his ethical and aesthetic thought. Reversing the positivist hierarchy of values, Deustua defended the primacy of freedom over order and the fundamental importance of aesthetic value as the most undiluted expression of human beings' creative freedom.

Diop, Cheikh Anta (1923–1986). Contemporary Senegalese historian intellectual who defends the view that philosophy is implicit in many societal practices, including artistic productions, economic arrangements, and political institutions.

Dogen Kigen (1200–1253). Japanese Zen master, considered the founder of the Soto school. He wrote the first major Buddhist treatise in Japanese, the Shobogenzo (Treasury of the True Dharma Eye).

Dussel, Enrique (b. 1934). Contemporary Argentinian philosopher who is a major proponent of liberation philosophy. Dussel encourages appreciation of the perspectives of marginalized peoples of the world and the development of more equitable approaches to the economic relationships between the peoples of the northern and southern hemispheres.

Fanon, Frantz (1925–1961). Thinker from Martinique whose experiences as a practicing psychiatrist in Algeria led him to theorize about the nature of colonialism. According to Fanon, colonialism is premised on the colonizer's view of the colonized as non-human and the internalization of this view by the colonized. According to Fanon, violence (which Fanon understands as the violation of all the boundaries erected by the colonizer) is essential if the colonized are to reassert their humanity.

Heidegger, Martin (1889–1976). German philosopher who rejected mind/body dualism and attempted to articulate the nature of being from the point of view of
a particular being already within the world (which he called *Dasein*, literally “being-there”).

**Heracleitus** (ca. 535–470 B.C.E.). Pre-Socratic philosopher who claimed that change is the basic nature of things.

**Hountondji, Paulin** (b. 1942). Professor of philosophy at the National University of Benin who helped reestablish democracy in Benin after the fall of a military regime that ruled his country for twenty years. Hountondji is a critic of ethnophilosophy who defends the universality of philosophical aims and methods, which he associates with scientific objectivity. Hountondji insists that philosophical ideas must be written in order to function as philosophy in the traditional sense.

**Kant, Immanuel** (1724–1804). German philosopher who argued that we can know the structure of the phenomenal world because our own minds impose order on it, but that we cannot know the noumenal world (the world “in itself”).

**Kapila** (seventh century B.C.E.). Legendary founder of the Samkhya system of Indian thought.

**Lame Deer** (1903–1984). Lakota elder whose ideas were recorded in literary form. Lame Deer emphasizes the cyclical patterns of nature and the interconnections among the earth and its inhabitants.

**Luther, Martin** (1483–1546). Translator of the Bible into German and initiator of the Protestant Reformation. Philosophically, Luther was particularly influenced by St. Paul and St. Augustine. He argued that human beings are inherently sinful and torn between the flesh, with its desires, and the spirit. He also contended that salvation could not be achieved by means of good works but could result only from God’s grace.

**Mariátegui, José Carlos** (1894–1930). Peruvian thinker who considered the Inca economic system to be a form of communism and anticipated that the descendents of the Incas would bring about a revolution in modern Peruvian society. He advocated the return of land to the Indians and the reinstatement of the Inca system of distribution.

**Marx, Karl** (1818–1883). Nineteenth-century German philosopher who argued that historical change is the consequence of economic forces. He predicted a communist revolution in which the proletariat, the working class in industrial society, would rebel against the capitalists who owned the means of production and that the result would eventually be a classless society.

**Mbiti, John** (b. 1931). Contemporary Kenyan theologian. He is sometimes classified as an ethnophilosopher, because his accounts of traditional African beliefs are motivated by the aspiration to propagate Christianity.

**Mencius** (*Meng Tzu, or Mengzi*) (372–298 B.C.E.). Confucian philosopher who lived approximately 100 years after Confucius. Mencius claims that the human heart/mind naturally contains the seeds of goodness, which will flourish with proper cultivation.

**Mozi** (*Mo Tzu*) (479–381 B.C.E.). Ancient Chinese thinker who preached universal love, without special treatment of family members, and moral decision making on the basis of what course of action would yield the best consequences. Despite his doctrine of universal love, however, Mozi promoted the use of armed force when necessary to secure order.

**Nagarjuna** (ca. 150–200 C.E.). Indian Buddhist philosopher who used rational argumentation with the aim of pointing toward a vision that transcends reason.

**Nietzsche, Friedrich** (1844–1900). German philosopher most famous for his statement, “God is dead,” and for his image of the “superman” (Übermensch), a type of being that would transcend contemporary humanity. Nietzsche’s philosophy concerned what he saw as the modern crisis of values that he termed “nihilism” and his reflections on how humanity might recover from this situation.

**Nishitani, Keiji** (1900–1990). Japanese philosopher and member of the twentieth-century Kyoto school. Nishitani was a comparativist, drawing on the Western and Chinese, as well as the Zen, traditions.

**Oruka, Henry Odera** (1939–1995). Contemporary African philosopher who classified the philosophical approaches in contemporary African thought into four categories. Oruka contended that although many traditional African thinkers were insufficiently critical of their societies to be philosophers in the strict sense, Africa had its share of philosophical sages, who were genuine philosophers, in earlier times.

**Parmenides** (fl. 500–450). Pre-Socratic philosopher who asserted that only eternal things are real and that, accordingly, change does not exist. The everyday world that appears to change is, according to Parmenides, illusory.

**Patanjali** (second century B.C.E.). Legendary compiler of the *Yoga-sutra* about whom little else is known.

**Plato** (ca. 427–347 B.C.E.). Ancient Greek philosopher who wrote dialogues featuring the figure of his actual teacher, Socrates. Although the relationship between Plato and his character Socrates is subject to debate, the dialogues suggest that Plato believed that this world and its contents are reflections of eternal prototypes called the Forms and that insight into the Forms constitutes wisdom.

**Pythagoras** (ca. 581–507). Pre-Socratic philosopher from Samos who discovered that strings of simple intervals vibrate in harmony with one another. Pythagoras contended that number is the basic principle underlying the order of the universe.

**Sahrawardi, Yahya al-** (d. 1191). Persian philosopher and Sufi sheik. Al-Sahrawardi held that light is the foundation of the world and that God is the
Supreme Light. Knowledge, on his account, is an intuition of light, literally an illumination. He drew on Western ideas in his interpretation of Islam, particularly neo-Platonic ideas. He was executed for heresy.

Sei Shonagon (b. 966 C.E.). Lady-in-waiting to the Heian empress and author of a diary, or "Pillow Book," that is one of the great works of Japanese literature.

Senghor, Léopold Sédar (b. 1906). A poet and political leader in Senegal, Senghor was a proponent of the negritude movement, which he helped to found. Negritude is the notion of a distinctive mode of apprehending reality, characteristic of Africans and descendants of Africans, that is emotional and participatory, as opposed to the European approach of disinterested analysis. Senghor was the president of Senegal for over twenty years. He defended socialism as the social and ethical system that is logically continuous with negritude.


Siddhartha Gautama (fourth–fifth centuries B.C.E.). The historical Buddha, also known as Shakyamuni. Siddhartha Gautama began life as a sheltered prince. On discovering the reality of suffering, he devoted his life to seeking a solution. After experiments with asceticism and sensual indulgence, he achieved a vision of how to end the world's suffering, which he formulated in the Four Noble Truths.

Socrates (469–399 B.C.E.). Ancient Greek philosopher, considered the "father" of Western thought. Socrates did not write texts but instead practiced philosophy through conversation. We know him through the accounts of his contemporaries, particularly the dialogues of his student Plato, most of which feature him as the central character. (Whether Plato sought to provide historically accurate portraits of Socrates is a matter of considerable debate. Most scholars think that the early dialogues are fairly accurate but that Plato gradually developed his own ideas, which he expressed through the Socrates of the later dialogues.)

Tempels, Placide (1906–1977). A Franciscan missionary from Belgium who worked in the Congo for almost thirty years. Tempels's book, Bantu Philosophy, attempted a systematic account of the worldview of the Bantu peoples. As a missionary, Tempels's work was motivated in large part by the aim of learning how to convey Christian doctrine to the Bantu. Although he treated the traditional views of the Bantu with more respect than did many of his contemporaries, his work has been criticized as a paradigm instance of an ethnophilosophical treatise written by someone from outside the culture being analyzed, implicitly supportive of colonialism.

Thales (624–546 B.C.E.). Pre-Socratic philosopher who claimed that water is the basic substance of which other things are composed.

Thomas Aquinas (1224–1274). Dominican priest and Doctor of the Catholic Church who produced a grand synthesis of Catholic doctrine and Aristotelian philosophy. This synthesis also conjoined Christian thought with that of certain Islamic thinkers, because Thomas drew on some of Aristotle's Islamic commentators.

Tlaltecuhtli (fifteenth century). Aztec general who revised Aztec history to reflect a more militaristic worldview in 1424.

Vasconcelos, José (1882–1959). Mexican philosopher and political activist who believed that a new "cosmic race," descended from all four of the main racial groups in the world and committed to universal kinship, would appear in Latin America. After briefly defending positivism, Vasconcelos developed a philosophical position that countered positivism and defended the importance of emotion and aesthetic appreciation for understanding reality.

Xunzi (HSIN Tzu) (298–212 B.C.E.). Prominent Confucian and China's first philosophical essayist, in the modern sense of the word. One of the essays attributed to Xunzi contends that human nature is essentially evil, or base. Xunzi was very pragmatic, but he continued to defend ritual as serving important psychological and social functions.

Yang Chu (fourth century B.C.E.). Early Daoist thinker who held that nothing was more valuable than life and is most noted for his extreme ethical egoism.

Zhuangzi (CHUANG Tzu) (369?–B.C.E.). Early Daoist, often considered China's greatest writer. Zhuangzi conveys Daoist ideas through stories, which are frequently quite startling.

Zhu Xi (CHU Hsi) (1130–1200). Neo-Confucian philosopher who drew on ideas from Buddhism and Daoism in his interpretation of Confucianism. He advocated a combination of studious inquiry and quiet sitting as the means of self-cultivation.

Mythological and Legendary Figures

Ajala. (Yoruba) Orisha who is the potter of inner heads.

Arjuna. Commander of the Pandavas (one of two warring families) and a major figure in the Bhagavad Gita and the Mahabharata, more generally.

Huizilopochtli. (Nahuatl) The war god of the Aztecs, who came to be considered identical to the sun god after General Tlaltecuhtli revised the history of the Aztecs in 1424.

Krishna. Avatar of Vishnu and major speaker in the Bhagavad Gita.

Nanhuatzin. (Nahuatl) One of the two gods who, according to Aztec myth, sacrificed themselves by jumping into the divine hearth of the gods at the end of the Fourth Sun. The current sun, the Fifth Sun, was understood to be a reincarnation of Nanhuatzin.
Olorun. (Yoruba) The Supreme God. In contemporary times, Olorun has been identified as the Christian God and the Muslim Allah.

Ometéotl. (Nahuatl) The supreme god of the Aztecs, a dual god who was both father and mother.

Orishas. (Yoruba) the deputy gods of Olorun, the Supreme God. Traditionally, sacrifices are made to the orishas, not directly to the distant Supreme God, although prayers are offered to the latter.

Tecuciztecatl. (Nahuatl) One of the two gods who, according to Aztec myth, sacrificed themselves by jumping into the divine hearth of the gods at the end of the Fourth Sun. The sacrifice of Tecuciztecatl and Nanhuintzin enabled the Fifth Sun (the sun of the current era) to appear. Human beings were obliged to perform sacrifices to repay the gods.

Vishnu. The god of the Indian pantheon who sustains the world.

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General


philosophical outlooks have affected art in five African cultures and how these, in turn, influenced artistic traditions in the Western hemisphere.


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Lakota elder, drawing attention to the human being’s relationship to the earth and other creatures.

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*Hsun Tzu. Basic Writings*. Translated by Bruce Watson. New York: Columbia University Press, 1963. A translation of some of the most influential essays by Xunzi, including the essay defending the idea that human nature is bad.

LaFargue, Michael. *The Tao of the Tao-Te Ching*. Albany: State University of New York, 1992. An annotated commentary of the *Dao De Jing*, with a section-by-section analysis of the sources of the text. LaFargue suggests that some of the passages in sections are quotations or paraphrases of what was received wisdom, with commentaries in other parts of the same sections.


**Chinese Philosophy: Secondary Sources**

Allan, Sarah. *The Shape of the Turtle: Myth, Art, and Cosmos in Early China*. Albany: State University of New York Press, 1991. This book considers the cosmology and art of the early Shang Dynasty (ca. 1700–1100 B.C.E.), the dynasty that later Chinese society treats as its model. Allan considers such artistic forms as the *taotie* mask on Shang bronzes as manifestations of a consistent system, which later eras reinterpret.


Cook, Francis H. *Hua-yen Buddhism: The Jewel Net of Indra*. University Park: Pennsylvania State University Press, 1977. An account of the Chinese Hua-yen sect of Buddhism. The Buddhist doctrine of interdependent arising is explained with reference to an image from Indian mythology: that of the god Indra’s net, studded with gems in which all the other gems are reflected. Although the focus is Hua-yen Buddhism, this account is helpful for those seeking to understanding Buddhist thought more generally.

Fingarette, Herbert. *Confucius: The Secular as Sacred*. New York: Harper & Row, 1972. A fascinating guide to the Confucian project, which presents Confucian concerns as a response to his historical circumstances. Traditional Confucian virtues are explained with examples that are familiar to the modern Western reader.


Hall, David L., and Ames, Roger T. *Thinking from the Han: Self, Truth, and Transcendence in Chinese and Western Culture*. Albany: State University of New York, Press, 1998. A comparative discussion of three concepts in Chinese and Western thought—self, truth, and transcendence—to clarify the different starting points of these cultures’ philosophical thinking.

Chinese approaches to understanding the order of the world, with particular emphasis on the implications of the aesthetic orientation of Chinese thought.


**Indian Philosophy: Primary Sources**

*The Bhagavad Gita: Krishna’s Counsel in Time of War*. Translated by Barbara Stoler Miller. New York: Bantam Books, 1986. A recent, accessible translation of the *Bhagavad Gita*, which includes an introduction that explains the context, a glossary of important terms, and an afterward about Thoreau’s interest in this Indian epic.


**Indian Philosophy: Secondary Sources**


Deutsch, Eliot. *Advaita Vedanta: A Philosophic Reconstruction*. Honolulu: East-West Center Press, 1969. A thorough but succinct introduction to Advaita Vedanta, covering its basic doctrines and defenses of them. The book discusses the philosophical problems raised by the Advaita belief that there is only one thing and the Advaita solutions, particularly regarding the status of the world and that of the self. The book explains central terms in Advaita, keeping jargon to a minimum.


Potter, Karl. *Presuppositions of India’s Philosophies*. Englewood Cliffs, NJ: Prentice-Hall, 1963. An exploration of a number of philosophical topics, integrated around the themes of the quest for freedom and resignation as the route to attain it. Prominent consideration is given to the role of reason and speculation, self-knowledge, and causation in Indian thought.


**Japanese Philosophy: Primary Sources (in translation)**

Dogen Kigen. *Shobogenzo: Zen Essays by Dogen*. Translated by Thomas Cleary. Honolulu: University of Hawaii Press, 1986. A recent translation of thirteen chapters of Dogen’s most important work, which discusses Zen psychology and practices. Includes a helpful introduction summarizing Dogen’s biography and his teachings, particularly in the *Shobogenzo*. 

Sei Shonagon. The Pillow Book of Sei Shonagon. Translated by Ivan Morris. London: Penguin, 1967. Includes helpful notes to explain the historical and cultural context, as well as illustrations indicating such things as the kind of clothing worn and the floor plans of imperial buildings.

Japanese Philosophy: Secondary Sources


Mesoamerican and Latin American Philosophy


Clendinnen, Inga. Aztecs: An Interpretation. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1991. A historical account of the Mexica (Aztec) people, seeking to make sense of the ritual killings of the Aztecs and the way they were understood by the ordinary members of the society. The book includes detailed discussion of the Aztec conception of art and poetry as means of gaining insight into a world more true than this one.


León-Portilla, Miguel. Aztec Thought and Culture. Translated by Jack Emory Davis. Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 1963. A clear and thorough discussion of the philosophical ideas of the Aztecs, with particular emphasis on the reflections of tlaltzinime, the "knowers of things," who were responsible for the transmission of higher learning.


———. “Pre-Columbian and Modern Philosophical Perspectives in Latin America,” in Solomon and Higgins, *From Africa to Zen,* pp. 81–100. A survey of philosophical developments in Mesoamerica and Latin America, beginning with the worldviews of the Aztecs, Maya, and Incas, and including discussion of contemporary developments.

Weinstein, Michael A. *The Polarity of Mexican Thought: Instrumentalism and Finalism.* University Park: Pennsylvania State University Press, 1976. An account of philosophical opposition to positivism among twentieth-century Mexican philosophers. Weinstein presents this tradition as having insights useful to our current efforts to deal with problems related to globalization and the economic dominance of multinational conglomerates.

**Western Thought: Primary Sources**

The following are excellent translations of some of the classics of Western philosophy:


**Western Thought: Secondary Sources**


Irwin, Terence. *Classical Thought.* Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1989. An introduction to ancient Greek and Roman philosophy, focusing on major schools of thought and their important figures. This book aims to give an overview of the thought of this period for the layperson and does not presuppose background knowledge of philosophy.
World Philosophy
Part II

Lecture 13: *The Bhagavad Gita*
Lecture 14: *The Buddha's Teachings*
Lecture 15: *Theravada & Mahayana Buddhism*
Lecture 16: *Nagarjuna's Interpretation of Buddhism*
Lecture 17: *The Chinese Conception of Reality*
Lecture 18: *Confucius*
Lecture 19: *Confucian Virtue*
Lecture 20: *Confucian Schools—Mencius & Xunzi*
Lecture 21: *The Daoist Response to Confucianism*
Lecture 22: *Daoism & Early Buddhism in China*
Lecture 23: *Buddhism in China & Japan*
Lecture 24: *Synthesis*

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World Philosophy
Part II
Professor Kathleen Higgins
University of Texas at Austin
Kathleen M. Higgins, Ph.D.
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Kathleen M. Higgins holds the rank of professor of philosophy at the University of Texas at Austin, where she has been teaching since 1982. She did undergraduate work at Saint Mary College in Leavenworth, Kansas, and the University of Missouri—Kansas City, where she received her B.A. in music in 1977. She did graduate work in philosophy at Yale University, receiving her M.A. in 1978, her M. Phil. in 1979, and her Ph.D. in 1982. Professor Higgins has taught at the University of California, Riverside, and she is a regular visiting professor at the University of Auckland. Her academic honors include appointments as Resident Scholar at the Rockefeller Foundation’s Bellagio Study and Conference Center (1993) and Visiting Fellow of the Australian National University Philosophy Department and the Canberra School of Music (1997). She also received an Alumni Achievement Award from the Conservatory of Music at the University of Missouri—Kansas City (1999).

Professor Higgins is the author of The Music of Our Lives (Temple University Press), Comic Relief: Nietzsche’s Gay Science (Oxford University Press), and Nietzsche’s Zarathustra (Temple University Press), which was named one of the outstanding academic books of 1988–1989 by Choice. She is also co-author of three books with her husband, Robert C. Solomon, who is a professor of philosophy and business at the University of Texas at Austin. These are A Short History of Philosophy (Oxford University Press), A Passion for Wisdom (Oxford University Press), and What Nietzsche Really Said (Schoken Books). Professor Higgins has also edited books on ethics, Nietzsche, nineteenth-century philosophy, erotic love, aesthetics, and world philosophy. She has co-edited several of these with Professor Solomon, including From Africa to Zen: An Invitation to World Philosophy (Roman and Littlefield) and World Philosophy: A Text with Readings (McGraw-Hill).

Professors Higgins and Solomon have also released, on audiotape and videotape, a series of lectures on Nietzsche entitled The Will to Power: The Philosophy of Friedrich Nietzsche (with The Teaching Company).
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Scope:

This set of twenty-four lectures introduces the student to some of the central views in the world's diverse philosophical traditions. Using the orientation of Western thought as a departure, the course considers some of the alternative worldviews that developed in Africa, the Americas, India, China, and Japan.

The first lecture suggests the extent of world philosophy, tracing key developments throughout the world and emphasizing parallels among traditions. Lectures Two through Four survey some of the key themes and emphases in Western thought. Lecture Two considers ancient Greek thought about the difference between appearance and reality, focusing on Plato's explanation in terms of two distinct realities, the material world and the truer world of the Forms. This lecture also considers Aristotle's rejection of the two worlds theory and his alternative analysis of the world in terms of natural kinds. Lecture Three discusses the influence of Judaism, Christianity, and Islam on Western thought with regard to the nature of the human being. Lecture Four describes the prominence of reason in many Western thinkers' understanding of ethics and the nature of the good life for human beings.

Lecture Five begins a comparison of Western thought with philosophy elsewhere by indicating some differences between Western presuppositions and those of the traditional Yoruba tribe of Nigeria. This comparison will reveal ways in which Western thought is idiosyncratic, developing its own unique mix of emphases and explanations. Lecture Six considers the potential for non-Western thought to influence Western philosophy. This lecture discusses the current ecological crisis and the possibility that the American Indians' understanding of human beings' relation to nature might help industrialized societies to develop an approach that is more sustainable than its current orientation.

Lecture Seven turns to the effects of Western influence on non-Western thought. In particular, this lecture discusses the difficulties encountered by contemporary thinkers in Africa and Latin America as they attempt to articulate a philosophy that is appropriate for nations whose traditions were disrupted by colonialism and whose own outlooks have been transformed by encounters with the West. Lecture Eight considers the philosophical outlook developed in Aztec society before colonialism. It describes the Aztecs' understanding of human responsibility toward nature, as well as their answer to a question addressed by philosophers across the globe: What is the meaning of life in a world so filled with suffering? Lecture Nine turns to post-colonial Latin American thought and suggests that its strong emphasis on issues of ethics and political philosophy reflects the importance of these concerns in societies whose earlier social order has been disrupted by foreign invasion.
Lectures Ten through Thirteen address the answers to the question of life's meaning provided by the early traditions that developed on the Indian subcontinent, answers that contrast with the sociopolitical orientation of recent Latin American thought by focusing predominantly on inner life. Lecture Ten discusses the tendency of Indian thought to distinguish between appearance and reality (a tendency reminiscent of ancient Greek thought). This distinction is particularly important for Indian ideas about the nature of the self and the aims of human life. Lecture Eleven considers one ancient approach to the question of how the human self is related to the rest of reality, the Samkhya school's analysis in terms of two principles, consciousness and material nature. The Samkhya school contends that the spiritual goal for human beings is to liberate consciousness from its connection with the material world, an achievement that is facilitated by yoga, or spiritual discipline. Lecture Twelve considers the alternative explanation of the self's relationship to the world offered by the Vedic traditions. The Vedic traditions contend that there is only one reality, a supreme power called Brahma, and that everything else is illusory. Lecture Thirteen discusses the synthesis of insights from both Samkhya and the Vedic traditions that emerges in the Bhagavad Gita, a part of a long epic poem, the Mahabharata. The Bhagavad Gita accepts the idea of Brahman as a single reality, but it also promotes a type of yoga that is focused on attending to one's everyday duties in a selfless fashion.

Lectures Fourteen through Sixteen discuss the development of Buddhist thought in southern Asia. Lecture Fourteen considers the teachings of the historical Buddha, the prince Siddhartha Gautama, whose philosophy proposed a solution to the world's suffering through the elimination of selfish craving. Lecture Fifteen considers some of the doctrines that were articulated to explain features of the Buddha's insight. It also considers the divergence of two major schools of Buddhism, the Theravada and the Mahayana, which differ in their interpretation of the spiritual goal and the means for achieving it. Lecture Sixteen discusses certain influential philosophical formulations of the Mahayana understanding developed by Nagarjuna seven centuries after the life of the Buddha.

We postpone discussion of Buddhism's development in China until we have considered the two most prominent traditions of ancient Chinese thought, Confucianism and Daoism. Lecture Seventeen focuses on certain features of the Chinese view of reality that are common to both schools, particularly the idea that the world is fundamentally energy in a process of continual change. Lectures Eighteen through Twenty consider the philosophy of Confucius and his intellectual descendants Mencius and Xunzi. Lecture Eighteen discusses the philosophical efforts of Confucius to restore civility and cooperation to a society on the verge of disintegrating because of warfare and a climate of mistrust. An important theme in this lecture is Confucius's emphasis on ritual as a means of creating social harmony. Lecture Nineteen considers some of the particular virtues that Confucius recommends as valuable for regenerating a more humane social order. Lecture Twenty compares the interpretations of Confucianism provided by Mencius and Xunzi, focusing on the way their alternative understandings of human nature result in different approaches to the ideas of Confucius.

Lectures Twenty-One and Twenty-Two discuss Daoist thought and the Daoists' criticisms of Confucianism. Lecture Twenty-One emphasizes the Daoist insistence that political power and preconceived formulations (including ritual) can be harmful and the Daoist ideal of non-assertiveness. Lecture Twenty-Two considers the Daoist spiritual ideal, ziran, or spontaneity. Lecture Twenty-Two also describes the way in which Daoist terms helped Buddhism to gain a foothold in China. Lecture Twenty-Three discusses the Japanese aesthetic orientation toward nature, which proved to be hospitable for the development of Zen. Lecture Twenty-Four reviews some of the central philosophical questions we have considered and the answers given by various traditions. The lecture concludes with the suggestions that the synthesis of ideas from various traditions that we observe in Zen is typical of philosophical traditions and that we should expect future answers to our philosophical quandaries to be enriched by the diverse traditions that are our common human inheritance.
Lecture Thirteen
The Bhagavad Gita

Scope: The Bhagavad Gita, a part of the epic poem the Mahabharata, conjoins insights from the Samkhya school with the monism of the Vedas. The Gita describes a conversation between the warrior Arjuna, and his charioteer, who is actually Krishna, an incarnation of the god Vishnu. Recognizing friends and relatives on both sides, Arjuna hesitates to begin a battle. Krishna tells Arjuna that he should not fear death, because the true Self is Atman, indistinguishable from Brahma. In this respect, he defends the monistic view of Brahma as the supreme reality. Yet he also endorses the Samkhya emphasis on yoga, or spiritual discipline, which can be accomplished through selfless practice of one’s everyday activities. In this respect, he upholds the value of moral life in the phenomenal world rather than dismissing the phenomenal as merely an illusion. Significantly, however, the Bhagavad Gita acknowledges many ways to the same goal.

Outline

I. The Mahabharata epic is one of the important texts of Indian philosophy.
   A. It consists of more than 100,000 verses.
      1. The major episode is a battle between the Kauravas and Pandavas (rival families who are cousins) over the inheritance of a throne.
      2. Arjuna, a central character of many stories, is the third of five Pandava brothers and a famous archer.
   C. Krishna is an avatar of Vishnu.
      1. An avatar is God incarnate and a savior of humanity.
      2. According to much Indian theism, God assumes human form by being born as a divine individual whenever world events demand.

II. The Bhagavad Gita (composed around 200 B.C.E.) is an eighteen-chapter segment of the Mahabharata.
   A. The Bhagavad Gita combines Samkhya and Vedic ideas.
      1. The Samkhya school holds that consciousness and matter are incompatible, antagonistic forces (an ancient Indian idea that originated before the Aryan invasion).
      2. The Samkhya aim is to purge purusha of all contamination with matter. The Gita also calls for purification of consciousness.
      3. The Vedas affirm life in the whole.
      4. According to the Vedanta, duality is just a function of thought. Reality is One.

III. Krishna gives Arjuna insight into right and wrong by proclaiming the way of karma-yoga (yoga of selfless action).
   A. This conception of yoga is not precisely the same as discussed earlier.
      1. Traditionally, yoga involved a set of practices that were quite distinct from everyday activities.
      2. The karma-yoga that Krishna describes is externally the same as ordinary action, but it is performed in a spirit of self-surrender.
      3. Karma-yoga also involves devotion (bhakti) to the Supreme Lord (the Self within all).
   B. Krishna tells Arjuna not to fear death; it is just like changing clothes.
   C. More important, one is really Atman and, therefore, immortal.
      1. There is no death for the supreme Self.
      2. Thus, death is not a reason for grief.
      3. Pity for the individuated selves is inappropriate. They are, in their true nature, the immortal Self.

IV. In the Bhagavad Gita Krishna teaches key concepts of dharma and karma.
   A. Dharma means “law” or “duty.”
      1. Dharma is the key ethical concept in Brahmanism.
      2. Dharma is understood to involve the responsibilities that go with the line of work one has inherited.
      3. Krishna calls Arjuna’s attention to his dharma as a warrior. As a military leader he should give the order for the battle to begin.
   B. Karma literally means “action.”
      1. The basic idea of karma is that every action bears fruit.
      2. Karma includes psychological dispositions to act in certain ways, as a consequence of previous actions. Every action leaves residue (samskara) behind in the unconscious.
      3. Samskaras accumulate to form patterns, and these result in habits.
      4. Karma unfolds in its own time.
      5. Kleshas (hindrances or afflictions) result from bad karma.
   C. Karma is a retributive notion, based on a vision of moral justice.
      1. Karma can apply to groups and nations, as well as to individuals.

5. The Bhagavad Gita follows the Vedas in affirming that the world is a manifestation of a divine unity.

B. The scene of the Bhagavad Gita is the moment just before a battle of the Pandavas and the Kauravas.
   1. Arjuna, commander of the Pandavas, sees friends and relatives on both sides, and considers not giving the command for battle.
   2. Yet he is obligated to avenge himself and his brothers for their cousins’ attacks and to legitimately regain the throne.

C. Krishna, Arjuna’s charioteer, encourages Arjuna to begin the battle.
2. *Karma* results from actions, not intentions. (A wrongful act, even performed with good intentions, will result in bad *karma*.)

3. *Karma* is associated with *dharma*, because an action is judged in terms of the rule it observes or violates. Many specific obligations arise from one’s station in life.

D. *Karma* is not a fatalistic notion.

1. Some kinds of actions neutralize or avoid *karma*, including selfless action, virtuous action that yields positive *karma*, and avoidance of actions that will yield negative *karma*.

2. One can work with *karma*. Spiritual development is possible.

E. The *karma-yoga* that Krishna describes is designed to prevent more *karma* from accumulating.

1. The idea is that one goes about one’s usual duties and activities but in the spirit of detachment, without concern for results or reward.

2. *Karma* unites the will with the universal ground of being, Atman.

F. According to Krishna, salvation can be attained by ordinary people.

V. The *Bhagavad Gita* is a great synthesis, proposing a middle path between the naive quest for results and extreme asceticism.

A. The *Bhagavad Gita* affirms the value of the various paths prescribed by different schools, including the Samkhya school.

B. The *Bhagavad Gita* synthesizes Samkhya’s *guna* theory and the idea of purifying consciousness with the Vedic idea of a single Self.

C. The *Gita* simultaneously affirms life as a whole and acknowledges the ultimate reality of the supreme consciousness, which is God.

D. The goal of all spiritual disciplines is the knowledge of one’s unity with God. Therefore, these disciplines are various means to the same end.

Essential Reading:

The *Bhagavad Gita*.

Supplementary Reading:


Questions to Consider:

1. Do you think that working for results leads to misery? How would a religious outlook influence the answer to this question?

2. Is doing your duty always the morally right thing to do? Why might someone think otherwise?

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**Lecture Fourteen**

**The Buddha’s Teachings**

**Scope:** Buddhism was founded by an Indian prince, Siddhartha Gautama, who left his palace to be a spiritual seeker when he became aware of the world’s suffering. He adopted, then abandoned asceticism, then experimented with hedonism, before he attained a vision of the solution to the problem of suffering. This solution is a middle course between these extreme lifestyles. Because he attained this enlightening vision, Siddhartha Gautama is known as the Buddha, “the enlightened one.” The Buddha’s vision is articulated in the Four Noble Truths. Life involves suffering, according to the Buddha, which is the result of selfish craving. Suffering can, however, be overcome if one overcomes this craving. The method for overcoming selfish craving is described as the Eightfold Path, a description of the eight features of right living, characterized fundamentally by compassion.

**Outline**

I. Buddhism, founded by Siddhartha Gautama in the fifth to fourth century B.C.E., proposes a response to the problem of suffering.

A. Siddhartha Gautama, a prince whose life had been sheltered, was overwhelmed by compassion when he first encountered human suffering.

   1. In seeking an appropriate response, he went through periods of asceticism and hedonism before he reached enlightenment.

   2. He is called “the Buddha,” which means “the enlightened one.”

B. The Buddha formulated his solution to the problem of suffering in the Four Noble Truths, which he presented in his first sermon.

II. The First Noble Truth describes the problem: Life is suffering.

A. The world is full of suffering and dissatisfaction (*duhkha*). These troubles include pain, sickness, death, awareness of life’s transience, frustration of desire, and emotional distress.

B. Everyone’s life is filled with many occasions for suffering.

C. Even when you yourself are not disturbed, you are in contact with others who are.

D. Our troubles occur because we are attached to the idea of being an individual with a separate, continuing existence.

E. But there is no such self. There are only processes that we mistake for a substantial self.

F. We resist change, which makes us dissatisfied even with fleeting joys.
III. The Second Noble Truth analyzes the problem: The root, or cause, of suffering is craving and attachment.
A. "Craving" is understood to be selfish and greedy desire.
B. A person who craves ultimately craves the impossible, which is to be an enduring individual being. Various selfish ambitions are misguided efforts to gain such a self.
C. Selfish craving causes suffering.
   1. We want a separate, permanent existence, but this desire cannot be satisfied.
   2. The desire for a separate and permanent existence stems from ignorance (avidya) of the interrelation and dynamism of all things.
   3. Because of this ignorance, one sees the world falsely. One craves what appears to be outside the self or fears something external as a threat.
   4. Ignorance, even when it leads to false beliefs, has real effects.
D. The project of craving things outside oneself tends to escalate.

IV. The Third Noble Truth proposes the project: Suffering will cease if one stops craving.
A. One can eliminate suffering by eliminating its precondition.
B. When craving is eliminated, one experiences nirvana, which means "extinction."
C. Nirvana is a blissful experience.

V. The Fourth Noble Truth proposes a method to end craving, called the Eightfold Path.
A. The Eightfold Path involves:
   1. right thought;
   2. right resolve;
   3. right speech;
   4. right behavior;
   5. right livelihood;
   6. right effort;
   7. right mindfulness;
   8. right meditation.
B. The various parts of the Eightfold Path are not sequential. The aim is to integrate them.
C. The Eightfold Path is practical. It enables one to see things as they really are, to purify one’s motives, and to build good habits.
   1. The Buddha allegedly asked his disciples, "If your house were on fire, would you speculate about the nature of fire?"
   2. The Noble Truths involve us personally. They are not distanced, universal principles.

D. Ultimately, the Buddha’s vision is optimistic.

Supplementary Reading:
Inada, “Buddhist Reality and Divinity.”

Questions to Consider:
1. Do you think the elimination of selfish craving would eliminate all suffering? Why or why not?
2. Do you think that we suffer less when we as individuals feel less separated from the rest of the world?
Lecture Fifteen

Theravada and Mahayana Buddhism

Scope: Although the Buddha broke with orthodox Hinduism, Buddhism accepted some premises from Hindu thought, such as ideas that there is a cycle of rebirth and that the world as it appears to us is illusory. This latter insight is articulated through the doctrine of interdependent arising and the no-self doctrine. The doctrine of interdependent arising holds that the whole phenomenal world comes into being altogether, and that the apparent “things” in the world are all dependent on one another. The no-self doctrine holds that there is no separate, substantial self, because we, too, are part of the interdependent whole.

In time, Buddhists diverged in their interpretation of the Buddha’s message and the spiritual goal. Theravada Buddhists, stressing the historical Buddha’s attainment of enlightenment, describe the spiritual goal as becoming worthy of release from the cycle of rebirth. Mahayana Buddhists, by contrast, contend that the spiritual goal is to become a Bodhisattva, someone who is enlightened but remains in this world to help others end their suffering.

Outline

I. In addition to the Four Noble Truths, several doctrines are central in Buddhist thought.
   A. Anatman is the doctrine that there is no self.
      1. The word literally means “not Atman.”
      2. The Buddhists see the notion of Atman as involving an idea of a self substance. (The Brahmanists see this as a misunderstanding.)
      3. The Buddhists deny that there is such a thing as a substantial self.
   B. Nothing has intrinsic identity or permanent existence. “Things” are just abstractions from processes.
   C. Everything arises interdependently. (This doctrine is called interdependent arising; in Sanskrit, pratiyasaṃutpada.)
      1. Everything exists only in relation to other things.
      2. Each thing is dependent on everything else.
      3. Language does not directly mirror reality, because our words imply the existence of separate and static things.
   D. Anitya is the doctrine of impermanence, which holds that everything arises and passes away.
   E. Buddhists also accept the idea of karma, which claims that past action has effects on the doer.
      1. There is a kind of continuity, even though the self does not exist.
   F. Buddhists accept the Hindu doctrine of a cycle of rebirth. Nirvana results in the cessation of the cycle.
   G. The impact of karma typically continues beyond the death of the apparent individual.
   H. The effects of karma are then experienced in a new life.
   I. Samsara is the chain of causation that extends through the cycle of rebirth.

II. Eventually, different schools of thought developed in Buddhism.
   A. Buddhism was originally adopted by a rather elite segment of Indian society.
      1. Few peasants or members of the lower castes were among those who first heard the Buddha’s sermon.
      2. Initially, monasteries and nunneries were the Buddhist community. Buddhism was not considered a practice for the laity.
   B. Theravada Buddhism, the form of Buddhism predominant in South Asia, continues to emphasize the monastic life.
   C. Over the era of 200 B.C.E. to 100 C.E., Mahayana Buddhism, the form of Buddhism predominant in East Asia, gradually diverged from Theravada Buddhism.

III. Theravada Buddhism emphasizes the historical Buddha and his teachings.
   A. The aim of the Theravada Buddhist is to become an arhat, a person whose attainments make him or her worthy of nirvana.
   B. Emphasis is placed on the reality of the insight that is obtained in meditation.
   C. The primary Buddhist community is the monastery or nunnery. The religious life is considered the usual precondition for enlightenment.

IV. Mahayana Buddhism places less emphasis on the historical Buddha.
   A. Mahayana Buddhism stresses the historical Buddha’s compassionate example.
   B. But it also claims that the Buddha-nature, which dwells within all things, is timeless.
      1. The Buddha-nature is also known as “emptiness” (sunyata).
      2. Emptiness is the undifferentiated reality underlying all apparent things.
   C. Buddhas, enlightened beings, have appeared many times over the course of history, and they will continue to appear.
   D. Lay people, not only monks and nuns, can attain enlightenment.
   E. Good deeds contribute to enlightenment, according to the Mahayana school.
   F. The spiritual goal is to become a bodhisattva.
1. A bodhisattva is one who reaches enlightenment, but forgoes the blissful state associated with nirvana to help end suffering and help others attain enlightenment.
2. The Mahayana school interprets nirvana as the state of enlightenment, not as the condition of extinction.

V. The bodhisattva vows to promote the redemption of the world.
A. The vow symbolizes and demonstrates the non-duality of samsara and nirvana. Enlightenment is possible in this world.
B. One aspires to become a bodhisattva by acting like one, acting as though one is already without ego.
   1. Compassion is the sign of potential to become a bodhisattva.
   2. The Bodhisattva is filled with pure compassion, which is the same as right perception of the Void (another translation of sunyata).
C. One can recognize a bodhisattva through six “Perfections.” These are:
   1. charity, or boundless giving;
   2. good moral conduct;
   3. forbearance;
   4. energy, radiance (in the fullest development of this and the preceding perfections, one is reborn in a body of a Buddha, which is most beautiful);
   5. meditation;
   6. wisdom, insight. This is the supreme perfection consisting of insight into the emptiness (sunyata) of all phenomena.

Supplementary Reading:
Smart, "A Survey of Buddhist Thought."
Zimmer, Philosophies of India, pp. 534–552.

Questions to Consider:
1. If you accept the idea that things only have relative existence, how might this affect your attitude toward words that seem to name things?
2. Do you think it would affect your moral attitudes if you viewed yourself, not as an individual soul, but as a process dependent on a world of other processes?

Lecture Sixteen
Nagarjuna’s Interpretation of Buddhism

Scope: Nagarjuna (ca. 200 C.E.) articulated the Mahayana interpretation of reality in a way that placed greater value on the phenomenal world than many of his predecessors had done. Interpreting the doctrine that nothing has independent existence, the Mahayana school denied existence even to the causal chains that produce the apparent “things” we experience. In this view, only the metaphorical substratum, or the “thussness” of things, is real. According to Nagarjuna, the “thussness” of things is “emptiness” or “the Void” (sunyata). The Void is the supreme truth, and enlightenment consists of recognizing this truth. However, Nagarjuna also defends the two-truths doctrine, which acknowledges a role for conventional truth, that is, “truths” about the world as we experience it, even though they are not true in the most fundamental sense. Nagarjuna concludes that samsara, the world of cause and effect, is nirvana—or, in other words, that enlightenment is all around us.

Outline
I. Nagarjuna (ca. 200 C.E.) is the outstanding figure of the Madhyamika school (the “School of the Middle Way”) of Buddhism.
A. Legend holds that he was the founder of Mahayana Buddhism, but the basic ideas of Mahayana seem to have preceded him.
B. Nagarjuna wrote the Madhyamika Sastra (The Guidebook of the Middle Way).
   1. This guidebook enunciates the two-truths doctrine, as well as the notion of sunyata, the Void.
   2. The book offers Nagarjuna’s systematic statement of the Buddha’s “Middle Doctrine.”
C. Although Nagarjuna engages in refined argument, his aim is to use reason to lead beyond the rational.
   1. Like Socrates, he exposes inconsistencies and dubious assumptions made by proponents of various schools.
   2. The aim is to redirect attention from such arguments to experience.
   3. Nagarjuna is admired for his argumentation, despite his efforts to point beyond argument.
D. Nagarjuna challenges those who make dogmatic assertions about Buddhist doctrine.
   1. These dogmatists have lost sight of the practical nature of the Buddha’s message.
   2. Nagarjuna offers a demonstration that each dogmatic view contains the seeds of that very view’s contradiction.
3. For example, he considers the view of the Nyaya school (a school of Indian realism), which focuses on what kind of evidence or reasoning establishes an assertion as knowledge.

4. Nagajuna argues that any attempt to justify a claim requires its own justification. This leads to an infinite regression (and, hence, no justification).

5. Nagajuna often uses reductio ad absurdum, the strategy of showing that absurd consequences result from assuming one’s opponents’ views.

E. Nagajuna consistently uses the negative expression (“the Void”) to describe the spiritual goal, in order to avoid positing an essence beyond samsara. (His approach is a via negativa.)
   1. He does not make dogmatic statements.
   2. Hence, his opponents cannot use the same techniques he uses (showing the other side to be committed to a contradiction).

II. To understand Nagajuna’s purpose in referring to the Void, we must understand how the Theravada and Mahayana schools interpret reality.
   A. According to both schools, the ego (the individual self) is a series of moments, in which nothing continues.
   B. Each of these moments is infinitesimally short.
   C. But the chain of cause and effect that brings them about will go on eternally.
   D. The entities we imagine do not exist. According to the Theravada Buddhists, only the dharmas exist.
      1. In Buddhist thought, the dharmas are brief aggregates of causes and effects, which create the impression of entities.
      2. Every dharma is dependent on other “things.” (This is, again, the doctrine of interdependent arising.)
      3. Theravada Buddhists hold that the dharmas are short-lived but real.
      4. Mahayana Buddhists, however, deny that the dharmas are real. Only the metaphysical substratum is real, and it is beyond phenomenal description.

III. The Mahayana Buddhists refer to the metaphysical substratum as the “thusness” (tathata) of things.
   A. All the activities and attributes of phenomenal things (the “things” we perceive) are subject to change.
   B. The “thusness” of things is beyond change. It is the ultimate truth of all things.
   C. The “thusness” of things indicates something that is indescribable and can be indicated only as “thus, such manner.”

D. Real wisdom, insight into the “thusness” of things, is neither affirmative nor negative. (Strictly speaking, it is not even appropriate to claim that each “thing” is nonexistent.)

IV. Nagajuna, however, defends the two-truths doctrine, which acknowledges a role for conventional “truths” about phenomenal “things.”
   A. These “truths” are the relative, conditional truths of the everyday world.
   B. But there is also transcendent, absolute truth that is ineffable (and a full vision at once).

V. “The Void” is a common translation for sunyata in Nagajuna’s discussions.
   A. Nothing would be as it is without this fundamental reality, or “thusness.”
   B. It seems to be nothing from our everyday point of view because finite categories do not apply to it.
   C. Language and reason apply only on the finite level. Words like “Void” or “emptiness” are used to direct our thoughts to a realm beyond opposites.
   D. One can see that the world is but a dream if one recognizes sunyata.

VI. Nevertheless, samsara is nirvana.
   A. Samsara refers to the constantly changing phenomenal world, where causality appears to operate.
   B. However, the phenomenal world also provides the occasions for us to see through illusion.
   C. The term sunyata implies this whole message.

Essential Reading:

Supplementary Reading:
Kasulis, Zen Action, Zen Person, chapter 2.

Questions to Consider:
1. Do you agree with Nagajuna that the “facts” we accept regarding our everyday experience are not necessarily true in an absolute sense?
2. How does Nagajuna’s idea that the Void is the fundamental support of the world we experience differ from the Western idea that God supports the world?
Lecture Seventeen
The Chinese Conception of Reality

Scope: While thinkers in many traditions postulate a transcendent realm as "truer" than the world we encounter around us, Chinese philosophy focuses on this world. Chinese thinkers seek to discover the Dao (or "Way") of nature and the patterns of natural change. Change is understood as the fundamental condition of reality, and things can be understood only in terms of their dynamic relations with other things. All things consist fundamentally of qi (ch'i), which means "configured energy." Health and spirituality are both articulated in terms of the flow of qi. Mind/body dualism is absent from Chinese thought. Mind and body are a continuum, constituted by qi. Nevertheless, Chinese philosophy does make use of a duality termed yin and yang. Yin and yang represent the opposing tendencies inherent in all change. The interactions of yin and yang are responsible for the patterns that are observable throughout the natural world.

Outline

I. Chinese philosophy focuses on the changing world of our experience.
   A. Dao is a term for the world as a flowing whole.
      1. Change is the only thing that is constant.
      2. Change is the stuff of the universe.
      3. Changes occur in accordance with laws and patterns.
   B. Change is assumed as the normal condition.

II. The dragon provides an image of the cosmos as continually changing.
   A. This image serves to stabilize insights into the dynamic of things.
   B. The dragon is understood to be both benevolent and awesome.
   C. The dragon is a composite creature with the head of a lion, horns of a ram, body of a snake, scales to indicate that it is a sea creature, and feet.
   D. Its image of transformation is also evident in its similarity to the snake.
      1. The snake swallows its prey whole, transforming it into itself.
      2. Snakes shed their skin.
      3. The snake's coiling and spiraling suggest unpredictable movement and pulsating energy.

III. Chinese philosophy starts from an immanent position in the world.
   A. The Western philosophical tradition aspires to a vision of reality that is independent of any particular perspective.
   B. Chinese philosophy emphasizes differences among perspectives.
   C. Everything is interdependent.

D. Yin and yang represent the interrelationship of all opposites.
   1. They depend on each other as benefactor and beneficiary.
   2. Yin and yang originally referred to the sunny side and the shady side, which are relative concepts.
   3. Opposites change into each other.

IV. The human being, like every other thing in the world, is made of qi (ch'i), configured energy.
   A. Each thing is a configuration of this fundamental vital energy.
   B. Qi is both spiritual and material.
      1. There is no mind/matter dualism in Chinese thought.
      2. A person is a combination of light qi (the most refined and spiritual qi) and heavy qi (dispersed, more inanimate, and less powerful).
      3. Spiritual cultivation promotes the development of light qi.
   C. We are constantly in communication with, and influenced by, other things around us.

D. The Daoists particularly strive to return to primordial qi.
   1. Heaven, earth, and humanity can influence one another.
   2. Therefore, humans have the power to renew the equilibrium of the universe by nurturing the primordial qi.

E. The idea of a mutual influence between us and nature is reflected in the propensity of Chinese thought for analogical thinking.

F. One employs analogical thinking when consulting the I Ching (or Yi Jing, Book of Changes), which began as a divination manual.
   1. The text consists of hexagrams, interpreted by means of images, a judgment, and commentaries on these elements. Each hexagram has to do with a particular configuration of change.
   2. The I Ching helps one to address a concrete problem by providing an analogy, rather than by direct response to a specific situation.

Supplementary Reading:
Hay, "The Persistent Dragon (Lung)."
Hall and Ames, "Understanding Order: The Chinese Perspective."

Questions to Consider:
1. What implications would the view that one always encounters the world from a particular perspective have for the idea of objectivity?
2. Can you think of examples of qualities that change into their opposites and back again?
Lecture Eighteen

Confucius

Scope: Confucius (Kong Fu Zi, or "Master K'un," 551–479 B.C.E.) promoted a vision that was revolutionary even while upholding the values of tradition. Living during an era of warfare and political turbulence, Confucius proposed that nobility is not a consequence of birth but instead the result of moral cultivation. The ruler, ideally a noble person, should be the moral beacon for the community, leading by example instead of coercion. A society, like the family, should be one in which every member is responsive to, and responsible for, others. Rulers should be sure that their people are fed, particularly the elderly and the disabled. They should also educate their people, because education instills self-reliance and reverence for one's tradition. In particular, Confucius urged the cultivation and revitalization of traditional ritual practices as the means of forging and reinforcing benevolence and a spirit of cooperation.

Outline

I. Confucius (Kongfuzi, or "Master K'un," 551–479 B.C.E.) was China's first recorded private teacher.
   A. He entered government service and reached a rather high position by the age of fifty.
   B. Political intrigue forced him into retirement and exile.
   C. He was an itinerant teacher for the next thirteen years.
   D. He was rather frustrated that he did not obtain a significant government post in another state.
   E. Although tradition claims he was the author of some or all of the Chinese classics, he was mainly their transmitter.
   F. Confucius transmitted the classics according to a new moral vision.

II. Confucius's revolutionary idea was that nobility is available to everyone.
   A. Nobility is a function of merit and cultivation, not birth.
      1. The goal is to become an exemplary person.
      2. One can achieve this goal by cultivating oneself, with the aim of becoming a sage.
   B. Education, especially education in the classics, is important.
      1. Education of the members of society makes them self-reliant.
      2. Education also promotes reverence for tradition and makes it possible to learn from history.
   C. Confucius proposed his moral vision in a context of widespread warfare and chaos.
      1. Warlords, illegitimate usurpers, fought one another to gain power and expanded territory.
      2. What Confucius saw as the real purposes of government—to provide for people's needs and to harmonize society—were neglected.
      3. Confucius believed in a hierarchical social structure, but one in which the ruler should play the parental role of nurturing the social "family."
      4. During his time, however, mistrust and selfishness prevailed.

III. Although the idea was revolutionary, Confucius encouraged renewed observance of ritual, li.
   A. Confucius considered ritual the best means for restoring a spirit of community to his society.
      1. The rituals that Confucius has in mind are specified in greater detail than most of our societal rituals.
      2. However, our own rituals can help us to understand what Confucius had in mind.
      3. Herbert Fingarette points out that the simple ritual of shaking hands is part of our social vocabulary. We use this ritual to establish rapport.
      4. One is able to interact easily with other members of one's society because one knows its basic practices.
      5. By participating in ritual, people will spontaneously harmonize with one another.
      6. Ritual is beautiful. It affirms the dignity and value of human interaction.
   B. Confucius acknowledges that coercion can achieve order, but he claims that it cannot instill cooperation.
   C. Although ritual is prescribed, feeling must have priority over the procedures.
      1. Our own sense of politeness is like this.
      2. Someone who simply "goes through the motions" does not seem sincerely courteous or well meaning.
   D. Ritual is not pursued for immediate results. One should do what is right without concern for profit.

IV. Confucius defends ethical particularism.
   A. Appropriate behavior depends on the occasion, the individuals involved, and the nature of their relationship.
   B. Confucius has a relational sense of what is morally appropriate.
C. Extremely general rules (like Kant's categorical imperative) are insufficient to tell you what to do in a particular case.

D. Confucius offers general ethical suggestions by recommending and characterizing particular virtues (not specific rules).

Essential Reading:
*Analects*, books 1–4.

Supplementary Reading:

Questions to Consider:
1. Confucius does not sharply distinguish between morality and etiquette. Do you think a sharp distinction should be made?
2. Do you think that aiming to be virtuous will consistently make a person's behavior good, or do you think moral rules are also necessary?

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Lecture Nineteen

Confucian Virtue

Scope: The Confucian moral vision emphasizes virtue. Unlike the focus on rules that we see in many ethical systems in the modern Western world, we discover in Confucian thought an ethical particularism, an insistence on doing what is appropriate in the particular context. Central virtues include the virtue of ritual (*li*), appropriateness (*yi*), humanity (*ren*), and filial piety (*xiao*). Each of these virtues is understood in a relational context, in which human beings have reciprocal (though hierarchical) responsibilities toward one another. Confucius considers the virtues to be linked, and he summarizes them with a version of the Golden Rule: One should never treat someone else in a way that one would not want to be treated.

Outline

I. Confucius emphasizes a number of virtues that he considers characteristic of the exemplary person.
   A. We have already considered *li*, ritual, the observance of traditional practices.
   B. *Yi*, appropriateness, is another virtue having to do with customary action.
      1. This depends on personal authorization, making the ritual or practice your own. (Hall and Ames translate *yi* as "authority.")
      2. The aim is to become proficient at the rituals but to prevent them from being fossilized.
      3. Each generation and each participant need to reinvigorate these practices.
      4. Mind and body are attuned in behavior that is *yi*. One’s external actions are gestures that truly convey one’s state of mind.

II. Confucius’s emphasis on the family is reflected in his emphasis on *xiao*, filial piety.
   A. Confucius is not restricting concern to the nuclear family. He has in mind the extended family, including the dead and family friends.
   B. The family is the center of political life.
   C. The family is the basis on which other relationships are modeled.
      1. Family relationships involve two-way obligations.
      2. Children learn filial behavior by observing their parents, and they first practice concern for others in the family context.
   D. The point of filialness is not self-suppression or self-sacrifice.
      1. The family is where you can really be yourself.
2. Filiality involves an ideal of mutual nurturing.

III. Ren (jen)—translated as “humaneness,” “humanity,” or “benevolence”—is the touchstone of ethical value.
   A. The other virtues are manifestations of ren.
   B. Confucius believes in “the unity of the virtues,” the idea that the virtues can all be manifested in the same person.
      1. He claims that “one unifying thread” links the virtues.
      2. This “unifying thread” is a form of the Golden Rule: One should not behave toward anyone else in a way that one would not want to be treated.
      3. Confucius’s formulation is negative. This encourages one to imaginatively consider the other person’s position and what that particular person might find discordant.

IV. The good and most effective ruler is the virtuous ruler.
   A. Such a person rules by example.
      1. The exemplary ruler’s goodness results in moral force, de (te) (also translated as “power”).
      2. Goodness has charisma.
      3. The good ruler is like the pole star of the community.
   B. The ruler with de has an impact on others without using physical force.
   C. The exemplary ruler aims to do what is right, and good consequences result incidentally.
      1. This is another instance of doing the right thing without concern for profit.
      2. The idea is like that expressed in the New Testament: “Seek first the kingdom of God, and all else will be given to you besides” (Matthew 6:33).
      3. This view of profit is contrary to that defended by Mozi (Mo Tzu, ca. 470–391 B.C.E.). Mozi claimed that actions should be chosen on the basis of their expected results.

V. Confucius urges the attunement of names (cheng ming).
   A. The basic idea is that words should correspond to realities.
      1. Language is a medium for interpersonal relationships.
      2. To function well, language must be attuned.
      3. If names are not attuned, people don’t know how to behave.
   B. Names and other words are loaded morally.
      1. Terms we use loosely may have moral implications.
      2. Names for roles should be fulfilled both functionally and morally.
   C. The attunement of names serves as a principle of evaluation.

1. A father should be a real father; a ruler should be a real ruler.
2. Only when people are really fulfilling their alleged roles does society function smoothly.

Essential Reading:
Analects, books 7, 12, 15, 20.

Supplementary Reading:
Fung Yu-Lan, A Short History of Chinese Philosophy, chapter 4.
Hall and Ames, Thinking through Confucius, pp. 89–127.

Questions to Consider:
1. Do you think that a ruler’s good moral example is as powerful as Confucius believes it is?
2. Do you agree with Confucius that it is crucial to a good society that words and realities agree? Why or why not?
Lecture Twenty
Confucian Schools: Mencius and Xunzi

Scope: The successors of Confucius are often described as reflecting two approaches, sometimes termed "idealistic" and "realistic." This division is based on different answers to the question of whether human beings are basically good or basically evil. Mencius argues that human beings are basically good. By this, he means that the seeds of goodness are naturally present in the human heart/mind (considered a single faculty). These seeds will develop into virtue if properly cultivated, according to Mencius. Xunzi (Hsün Tzu), by contrast, argues that human nature is bad, by which he means that people are naturally selfish, motivated by desires. For this reason, Xunzi defends clear organizational hierarchy and coercion in government, as well as the use of ritual and music to channel human beings' emotions. Despite their differences, the two thinkers concur in claiming that the development of human goodness depends on cultivation and in believing that anyone can become a sage.

Outline

I. Mencius (Mengzi, 371?-289? B.C.E.), a great early proponent of the Confucian tradition, developed what is sometimes called the "idealistic school" of Confucianism.
   A. In Mencius's time warfare was widespread.
       1. There was no longer a sense (as there had been for Confucius) that the stability of the previous dynasty, the Zhou Dynasty, could be revived.
       2. Mencius traveled from one state to another, visiting a number of rulers. He does not seem to have had much influence on them.
       3. Like Confucius, Mencius spent his last decades with students.
   B. Mencius builds on Confucius's vision but enlarges it (according to A.C. Graham's analysis).
       1. Mencius emphasizes yi (appropriateness) more than li (ritual). He contends that yi is an externalization of the central virtue of ren.
       2. Mencius understands ren as benevolence, a narrower meaning than the term had for Confucius (who understood it more as general nobility).
       3. Mencius also focuses more on the inner person than on the details of external practice.
       4. Mencius understands li as an inner sense of good manners. He does not focus as much on external ceremony as Confucius had done.

II. Mencius is considered relatively "idealistic" or "optimistic" because he contends that human nature is basically good.
   A. Mencius debates with Mozi and his followers (the Mohists) over what motivates people to help individuals in distress.
      1. Mozi called for universal love, with no special treatment for family members.
      2. Mozi also insisted on the need for sanctions as the only way to keep the peace. Morality must be imposed from without.
      3. Mozi believed that desire for profit and fear of bad consequences were the main motives behind good behavior.
   B. According to Mencius, human nature is naturally good.
      1. Mencius acknowledges that appetites and self-centered desires are among the motives behind human behavior.
      2. However, human beings differ from animals in having heart/mind (xin), which makes it possible to resist one's desires.
      3. Heart/mind is part of one's natural endowment.
      4. The four seeds of goodness are in the heart/mind. These are: authoritative personhood (ren/ren), appropriateness (yi), ritual propriety (li), and wisdom (zhi/chih).
      5. These moral tendencies germinate spontaneously, like the growth of the body.
      6. These seeds require cultivation, but it is more natural to prefer goodness to the alternative.
      7. With proper cultivation of these seeds of morality, anyone can become a sage.
      8. These ideas sounded especially optimistic in Mencius's time, because the majority of the population had been desensitized by atrocities.

III. Xunzi (310–238? B.C.E.) was the major proponent of what is sometimes (pessimistically) called the "realist" school of Confucianism.
   A. He lived in a more troubled period than Confucius did, and his strategies for stabilizing the social world reflect this.
      1. For example, he is not so concerned that rulers have legitimate claims to kingship.
      2. He suggests that even for a dictator, there are better and worse ways to operate.
   B. Xunzi held political office as a magistrate until the ruler under whom he served was assassinated.

IV. Xunzi recognizes that society must be properly organized if people are not to go hungry.
   A. Xunzi defends ritual against the Mohists in pragmatic terms.
      1. Xunzi is anti-superstitious.
2. Rituals don't have supernatural impact, but they have an important impact on the religious dimension of life.
3. The point is to channel the emotions so that they do not disrupt psychological balance.

B. Music also serves important practical functions.
   1. Music sharpens the senses and harmonizes the bodily forces.
   2. Music stimulates sensitivity to the harmony that can be achieved among differentiated roles.

V. Xunzi defends hierarchy and coercion.
   A. The state must use coercion if people are to survive.
      1. Enscripting people for work on public projects, such as dikes and roads, is acceptable but only during appropriate seasons (after crops are in).
      2. Taxation is also appropriate, but the rate should not exceed ten percent.
   B. Hierarchy is essential.
      1. People have to organize themselves into a society (e.g., to prevent floods).
      2. If this organization is done without hierarchical divisions, quarreling will result.
      3. A hierarchically divided society is more stable than the alternatives.
      4. Xunzi also accepts that goods will be divided unequally.
      5. Yet he insists that minimum standards are necessary.
   C. Meritocracy is the appropriate way to structure society.
      1. Wealth and birth should not determine who governs.
      2. Hereditary titles should be abolished.
      3. The state has a responsibility to look after the well-being of its least prosperous members.
      4. If the ruler hires the right people, then he should be able to just sit back and let them do their jobs.

VI. Xunzi contends that human beings are basically "evil," or "base."
   A. "Evil" does not have the connotations we sometimes give it.
      1. Xunzi is not claiming that human beings are inherently sinful.
      2. But Xunzi is not impressed with human beings' raw material.
   B. The raw material that Xunzi has in mind is our appetites, our tendencies to desire things we encounter.
      1. Because we are naturally motivated by selfish desire, conflict is inevitable.
      2. Therefore, we must have clear rules establishing duties and entitlements.
      3. Human desires will not automatically organize themselves.

C. The views of Mencius and Xunzi are more similar than they might initially appear.
   1. Both think that anyone can become a sage.
   2. Both insist that cultivation is necessary for someone to develop into a mature, moral person.
   3. Their main difference is a matter of emphasis. Mencius stresses the aspects of human nature that assist the development of moral maturity, and Xunzi stresses those that inhibit it.

Essential Reading:
Hsün Tzu, Basic Writings, sections 9, 19, and 23.
Mencius, books 1 and 2.

Supplementary Reading:
Graham, Disputers of the Tao, pp. 107–113.
Ivanhoe, Confucian Moral Self Cultivation, pp. 15–42.

Questions to Consider:
1. Do you think human beings are naturally good or naturally bad (or neither)? Does this affect your moral expectations?
2. Should we treat everyone the same way in every respect, or should we show special regard for those who are close to us?
Lecture Twenty-One
The Daoist Response to Confucianism

Scope: Daoism (Taoism), another central current in Chinese thought, criticizes Confucianism for being too concerned with formalities and too little concerned that heart/minds communicate directly. The fundamental Daoist aim is to attune oneself with the Dao, the natural flow of the world. The primary strategy toward this end is to avoid those humanly constructed categories that interfere with our awareness of the Dao. Words can interfere with our perceptions. We should, therefore, avoid placing too much trust in linguistic formulations, which do not reflect the continual changes of the Dao. Many Daoist recommendations are cast in negative terms, such as "non-assertiveness" (wu-wei). Some interpret these precepts as guides to effectiveness in one's endeavors, because they usefully encourage a lack of self-consciousness and caution against trying too hard. Others stress the importance of non-assertiveness to avoid needless stress and damage to one's health. In any case, the Daoists encourage receptivity and flexibility in one's use of categories and adoption of goals.

Outline

I. We tend to see two different kinds of Daoism: philosophical and religious.
   A. Yang Chu (fourth century B.C.E.) was an early figure in Daoist thought.
      1. He is known as an egoist.  
      2. He argued that nothing is more valuable than life itself. This opinion is contrary to the Confucian belief that one should be willing to sacrifice to do the right thing and that some values are worth dying for.
      3. Yang Chu emphasized the maintenance of good health.
   B. We will refer particularly to two major Daoist texts, the origins of which are rather obscure.
   C. The Dao De Jing (Tao Te Ching, Way Power Book) is attributed to a legendary figure called Laozi ("the old master," traditionally believed to have lived in the sixth century B.C.E.). The book, accordingly, is referred to as the Laozi.
   D. The other major text is the Zhuangzi (Chuang Tzu), after the person to whom it is attributed (traditionally believed to have lived in the fourth century B.C.E.).
      1. Many consider Zhuangzi to be the greatest writer in the Chinese tradition.
      2. The Zhuangzi conveys insights through stories, often humorous stories.

III. The Daoists are critical of Confucianism.
   A. Scripted rituals can become obstacles to sincere communication.
   B. The Daoists are skeptical of the trappings of socialization.
      1. Some Daoists contend that one should not seek political office or positions of influence in society because this causes stress and encourages one to neglect one's mental and physical health.
      2. We try too hard to mold ourselves to life situations, instead of attuning ourselves to our own natures.
      3. The Confucians pay too much attention to artificial institutions and not enough attention to the world of nature.
   C. Success in life depends on attuning oneself with the Dao, both within and outside oneself.
      1. Some Daoists interpret this as an ideal of relative passivity.
      2. Others see attunement with nature as the best way to be effective in one's endeavors.

IV. Many of the recommendations of the Daoists are negatively expressed.
   A. Negative terms are less misleading than affirmative ones.
   B. A central concept of this sort is wu-wei, "non-action," or, more accurately, "non-assertive action."
      1. This ideal is to let things be and not to try too hard.
      2. The Dao De Jing sometimes presents this ideal as a mystical union with the basic rhythms of the world.
3. The *Dao De Jing* has been viewed as a manual for all kinds of purposes: medicine, politics, wisdom, mysticism, and so on.
4. But *wu-wei* is also recommended to political leaders: The best ruler does not rule.

V. *Wu-wei* is related to the ideal of flexibility with respect to one's goals.
   A. We enjoy what comes to us but are willing to let go of ambitions when circumstances do not accommodate our goals.
   B. In a sense, we are "objective," recognizing the state of the world at any given point and responding to it and its changes.
   C. By becoming one with our environment, we can develop great power operating in it.

Essential Reading:
Chuang Tzu, *Basic Writings*, chapters 2 and 7.

Supplementary Reading:

Questions to Consider:
1. Can you think of cases in which words interfere with understanding instead of assisting it?
2. The Daoists think that the Confucian prescription of detailed rituals encourages merely "going through the motions." Is this a fair criticism?

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**Lecture Twenty-Two**
**Daoism and Early Buddhism in China**

**Scope:** The Daoists maintain that our true identity is one with the flow of nature as a whole. Attuning oneself with the environment, therefore, gives one access to the power of one's own nature. The Daoist Zhuangzi (Chuang Tzu) uses examples of creative work to illustrate the power of the Dao working through individuals. *Ziran*, sometimes translated "spontaneity," refers to this unobstructed action of one's own nature. Beside being the best way of living, this attunement with the Dao also serves as a means for coming to terms with death.

Ironically, Daoist ideas facilitated the establishment of Buddhism in China. The arrival of Buddhism in China involved a major confrontation between Indian and Chinese worldviews, and a number of features of Chinese thought were inhospitable to Buddhism. The Daoist emphasis on nature's operating through every particular thing, however, made the doctrine of interdependent arising seem less foreign.

**Outline**

I. *Ziran* ("self-so-ness" or "spontaneity") is the Daoist ideal.
   A. To be *ziran* depends on being non-assertive.
      1. Spontaneous action is a mirroring response to one's world. One responds to what one perceives without being restricted by one's preconceptions.
      2. When one is *ziran*, one's behavior expresses one's true nature.
      3. Advance planning may prevent you from responding appropriately to a given situation.
   B. Zhuangzi's story of his conversation with Hui Shi about fish illustrates the difference between relying on one's preconceptions and spontaneous experience.
      1. Hui Shi (Hui Shi, or Hui Zi/Hui Tzu) is a logician. He is also Zhuangzi's mentor and favorite philosophical sparring partner.
      2. In this story, Zhuangzi and Hui Shi are engaged in dispute, but the disputation itself is a form of play.
      3. Hui Shi is taking the standpoint of the discriminating intellectual. He denies that we know how other creatures think or feel.
      4. Zhuangzi's experience is continuous with the world of the fishes.
      5. The story suggests that whatever you affirm is relative to the standpoint you occupy.
      6. Zhuangzi is denying that one can have "objective" knowledge, independent of the person whose knowledge it is.
7. Zhuangzi's final joke illustrates that one can be completely out of touch when one relies on words.

C. The story of Zhuangzi's dream of being a butterfly indicates the extent to which he endorses receptivity to one's immediate perceptions.
   1. Dreaming and waking states are both taken as genuine perceptions.
   2. This contrasts with the view of Descartes, who considers the experiences we have in dreams to be errors.

II. The Daoist conception of de, or power, focuses on how effective one can be if one's particular nature is not obstructed.
   A. This is not to say that rules can be completely dropped. Goals are like maps—useful but not necessarily indispensable.
   B. The Daoist sense of the highest good is for a person's presence to be a complement of all his or her environments.
      1. When one complements one's environment, one is empowered by it. One's influence extends beyond oneself.
      2. Zhuangzi's story of Cook Ding illustrates the Daoist understanding of de.

III. Attunement with the Dao can help one come to terms with death.
   A. Once one is de-socialized, self-transformation is possible. One returns to a closer affinity with the natural world and its rhythms.
      1. One becomes more absorbed in the present.
      2. One thinks less of the past, the future, and death.
   B. A kind of immortality is achieved through philosophical identification with the whole process of the universe.
      1. One triumphs over death by overcoming a narrow sense of selfhood.
      2. One comes to see one's own dissolution as part of the natural process of change.

IV. Daoist ideas helped Buddhist thought gain a foothold in China.
   A. At first, Buddhism seemed alien to Chinese sensibilities.
      1. It was a foreign religion.
      2. It encouraged people to join monasteries and nunneries. This lifestyle struck the Confucian Chinese as irresponsible to family and community.
      3. The Buddhist belief in reincarnation was also unacceptable to many Chinese, who felt obligated to offer sacrifices to the spirits of deceased ancestors.
   B. When Buddhist texts were first translated into Chinese, Daoist terminology and ideas were used to convey basic ideas in Buddhism.
      1. Nirvana, for example, was interpreted as wu-wei.

2. The Daoist characterization of the Dao bore some resemblance to the doctrine of interdependent arising.
3. Such translations through "matching concepts" were often not very accurate.
4. But until more accurate translations were available, this Buddhist use of Daoist terminology was the first of many steps in the development of a distinctively Chinese Buddhism.

Essential Reading:
Chuang Tzu, Basic Writings, chapters 3, 6, and 17.
Lao Tzu, Tao Te Ching, chapters 38–81.

Supplementary Reading:
Ames, Wandering with Ease in the Zhuangzi, chapters 8 and 11.
Francis Cook, Hua-yen Buddhism, chapter 1.
Wright, Buddhism in Chinese History, pp. 1–41.

Questions to Consider:
1. Can you think of cases in your own experience in which the whole environment seemed to assist your endeavors, or the opposite?
2. Do you think the Daoist vision of our participation in the larger flow of nature would offer consolation in the face of death? Why or why not?
Lecture Twenty-Three
Buddhism in China and Japan

Scope: Chinese Buddhism, drawing on the Mahayana insight that "samsara is nirvana," came to see the universe as the manifestation of an Absolute Mind, or the Buddha-nature. In this interpretation, each thing is a manifestation of the Buddha-nature in its totality. The Chinese interpretation of the doctrine of interdependent arising was that the particular thing is an occasion for enlightenment, not an illusory distraction from the truth. The idea of sudden illumination was particularly emphasized by the southern school of the Chan sect of Buddhism, which denied the northern school's view that enlightenment required an extended process of spiritual discipline and study of the suttas. The southern school became dominant. Chan Buddhism was exported to Japan, where it became "Zen." Zen advocates seated meditation as a means of realizing our true nature, unencumbered by our everyday preconceptions. Zen also uses techniques that startle disciples as a means for inducing enlightenment. The philosophical climate in Japan, particularly its aesthetic orientation, was hospitable to Zen, which in turn made contributions to Japan's artistic traditions.

Outline
I. As Buddhism developed in China, it acquired more Chinese characteristics.
   A. Mahayana Buddhism believes that other Buddhas exist beside Siddhartha Gautama.
      1. Chinese Buddhists acknowledge a colorful population of Buddhas and bodhisattvas.
      2. Among the Buddhas frequently depicted in art are Maitreya Buddha (the Buddha of the Future) and Amitabha Buddha (the Buddha of the Pure Land).
   B. A particularly important bodhisattva is Kuan-yin ("Cannon" or "Kannon" in Japan), the bodhisattva of compassion.
      1. Kuan-yin originated in the figure of a male Bodhisattva, Avalokiteshvara.
      2. However, the Chinese version of this bodhisattva, Kuan-yin, is female.
      3. Kuan-yin responds with compassion to everyone, both Buddhists and non-Buddhists.
   C. Chinese Buddhism placed less emphasis on reincarnation and extinction than did Indian Buddhism.

II. Chinese Buddhism tended to stress the Mahayana insight that "samsara is nirvana."
   A. Huayan (Hua-yen), Tiantai (T'ien-t'ai), and Chan Buddhism all took a positive view of the chain of interdependent arising.
      1. Each thing, even the inanimate, manifests the absolute mind, the Buddha-nature.
      2. This gives each thing tremendous value (although not as a separate entity).
   B. The world of the Buddha is this world.
   C. All things are already "perfectly enlightened." We only need to recognize this.

III. Chan Buddhism survives as a living practice (unlike many other schools, which were destroyed by persecution in 845).
   A. Chan Buddhism stresses work and service.
   B. The goal of Chan Buddhists is to realize one's true nature in the everyday world.
      1. Like the Daoists, the Chan Buddhists think that words and preconceptions often block insight into our true natures.
      2. The purpose of meditation is to return us to pre-reflective, pre-linguistic experience.

IV. Chan Buddhism developed different schools in northern and southern China.
   A. The northern school claimed that enlightenment was a gradual process.
   B. The southern school held that anything can be an occasion for spontaneously realizing the Buddha-mind, because the Buddha-mind exists in all things.

V. Chan Buddhism spread to Japan and became the school we know as "Zen."
   A. The term "Zen" is related to zazen, meaning "seated meditation."
      1. Dogen (1200-1253), the founder of the Soto school of Zen Buddhism, emphasized this form of meditation (involving sitting in a relaxed fashion, with open eyes, as a means of experiencing pre-reflective awareness).
      2. The Soto school accepts the idea of gradual enlightenment.
      3. Nevertheless, being in the present is emphasized: recognizing the flow of impermanence in the here and now.
   B. The Rinzai sect, the other major school of Zen, developed new techniques.
      1. The Rinzai school accepts the idea of sudden enlightenment, and its techniques are designed to precipitate it.
      2. One of these is the use of puzzling statements called koans that do not make sense by rational standards. For example, "What is the sound of one hand clapping?"
3. Another technique is the Zen master’s fighting with or hitting a disciple without warning.
4. The aim of these techniques is to startle the practitioner enough to break through preconceptions that obstruct insight.

VI. The philosophical climate in Japan was hospitable to the development of Zen and aesthetic expression of the Zen worldview.

A. Shinto, the traditional Japanese religion, placed emphasis on particular things in the natural world.
   1. Shinto involves the worship of natural objects, such as the sun, places, rocks, and some animals, which are seen as divine.
   2. The Japanese consider human beings to be an interdependent part of nature. (The Western image of human beings opposed to nature is alien to the Japanese orientation.)

B. The Japanese ideal of an aesthetic sensibility permeating everyday life is also consonant with the Zen appreciation of mundane particulars.
   1. The Heian period (794–1185) placed great emphasis on appreciating delightful details in everyday life.
   2. Sei Shonagon’s Pillowbook, a diary kept while she served as a lady-in-waiting to the empress (around 1000 C.E.), illustrates this appreciation of the everyday and the momentary experience.

C. Japanese art aims at suggestion more than explicit depiction.
   1. From the Zen point of view this enables art to hint at the “no-thing” doctrine—no thing is really substantial.
   2. The suggestion of form can be seen as but a moment in the process of impermanence. Forms arise and pass away.

VII. Many Japanese arts have taken inspiration from Zen.

A. Beside reflecting Zen themes in the content of what is presented, Japanese arts have been influenced by Zen through cultivating spontaneous action, without the mediation of thought (e.g., archery, swordsmanship).

B. The Samurai found the Zen notions of being “in the moment” particularly appealing, because a good warrior is someone who is concerned only with the moment.

C. Ikebana (the art of arranging cut flowers) aims to reveal the true nature of flowers and all things.
   1. The arrangement must also include empty space within it. This is another way of indicating that the flowers are supported by nothingness.
   2. The arrangement is designed to suggest the time span through past, present, and future.
   3. Indicating all these moments at once suggests a timelessness in the presentation.

5. Nishitani observed that the flowers in *ikebana*, by being cut out of their usual environment, are presented as “floating in emptiness.”
6. The flowers draw attention to the “thusness,” the reality, on which they and all things rest.
7. The flowers are arranged with the deliberate aim of revealing their particular inner character.

Essential Reading:

Supplementary Reading:
Cook, *Hua-yen Buddhism*, chapters 2 and 8.
Herrigel, *Zen in the Art of Archery*.
Keene, “Japanese Aesthetics.”
Parkes, “Ways of Japanese Thinking.”
Ryosuke, “Japanese Aesthetics: Kire and Iki.”

Questions to Consider:
1. Do you think a period of preparation is necessary for insight, or do you think that insight can occur spontaneously, regardless of what one has done beforehand?
2. How might one’s approach to Buddhism be affected by the belief that there have been and will continue to be many Buddhas, as opposed to believing that the word “Buddha” refers to a single individual?
Lecture Twenty-Four
Synthesis

Scope: In the last lecture we considered the suggestion of Nishitani Keiji, a contemporary philosopher trained in both Japanese and Western thought, that ikebana, the Japanese art of flower arranging, draws attention to the underlying "husness" on which all things float. He suggests that this awareness provides an answer to the radical questions about life's meaning raised by the modern world, in which science offers powerful technologies but little in the way of values. The aim of this course has been to shed light on some of the ways that human societies have confronted such questions so far. We have seen that philosophers around the world are concerned with similar approaches to these problems. Like Zen Buddhism, which drew from Indian and Chinese thought, our own answers in the future might be enriched by philosophical traditions from around the globe.

Outline
I. Nishitani, who was educated in both Japanese and Western thought, recognizes the transcultural dimension of the modern world and its problems.
   A. The modern world has focused its energies on developing powerful technologies to achieve many goals, but these technologies cannot give a sense of meaning to life.
      1. For the last century and a half, Western thinkers have articulated this problem.
      2. Friedrich Nietzsche (1844-1900) called the current crisis in values the problem of nihilism.
      3. Martin Heidegger (1889-1976) analyzed the role technology plays in the contemporary crisis in values.
   B. Nishitani suggests that awareness of emptiness, the fundamental reality underlying all things, can serve as a basis for a sense of meaning in our modern world.

II. The question "What is the meaning of life?" is confronted by people in all societies.
   A. Nishitani's approach draws on insights from multiple traditions and proposes an answer on the basis of Zen Buddhism, itself a product of both Indian and Chinese thought.
   B. Thinkers from different parts of the world converge on contemporary philosophical problems, not only because we have an increasingly global community, but also because human beings have repeatedly asked the same questions.

III. In this course, we have primarily considered philosophical traditions comparatively, indicating central issues in each and noting parallels as we proceeded. Some of the issues that recur in various traditions are as follows:
   A. Most cultures seek to answer the question of what is real and what is illusory.
      1. Western and Indian thought make a sharp distinction between different orders of being.
      2. Buddhist thought and Daoist thought distinguish the whole, which is the basic reality, from an illusory notion of an individual self that is separate.
   B. The nature of the self is a philosophical topic in most cultures.
      1. The Western world typically takes the self to be an individual and often, as an individual soul. Descartes equates this idea with a thinking substance.
      2. Some African societies, such as the Yoruba, believe that a number of soul elements go together to make up a human being.
      3. This does not, however, preclude belief in reincarnation. Indian thought (both Brahmanic and Buddhist) also includes the idea of reincarnation.
      4. The Yoruba believe that the self is relational. One is not a full person until one has assumed a particular role in society.
      5. Chinese views of the self are also strongly relational. Confucians stress that one is who one is because of the particular relationships one has to other people. They do not have a strong notion of self as an individual.
      6. The Daoists emphasize one's relationship to all of nature.
      7. The American Indians also emphasize human beings' relationship to nature, which they conceive on a family model. We are all kin of other natural entities, which are spiritual, as we are.
   C. The views that philosophical traditions take toward the nature of the self typically have implications for their views about our ethical obligations.
      1. American Indian views about human obligations to animals and the land stem from their views about our kinship with other beings in nature.
      2. The Aztecs, believing that the sun on which we depend came into being through a sacrifice by the gods, considered human sacrifice to the gods the appropriate response. They also held that the life forces released by human sacrifice were necessary nutrition for sustaining the sun.
      3. The Yoruba believe that work and having children, two ways of sustaining the community, are ways of fulfilling obligations to the
ancestors, who are understood to continue to function as members of the family and tribe.

4. Brahmic schools of thought traditionally tie many of one's personal obligations to one's role in society, which is understood to be a function of karma derived from actions in previous lives.

5. Confucians understand one's moral obligations to particular individuals to depend on one's relationships to them.

D. Although societies differ in their answers to the question, philosophical traditions tend to speculate on what the world is, taken as a whole.

1. Plato influentially claimed that this world is a reflection of a truer world, composed of eternal realities, the Forms.

2. Aristotle contended that this world itself is reality, with the entities in it classifiable in terms of their essential structures, or essences. These essences are unchanging.

3. American Indians consider the natural world to be a family structure, in which human beings are related to everything else as kin.

4. For the early Samkhya school, the material world is real but contaminating. To live a good life, one should disentangle one's consciousness from the natural world in all its manifestations.

5. For some Brahmic schools, such as Advaita Vedanta, the world (as anything separate from Brahman) is an illusion. There is only one reality, Brahman.

6. Chinese thinkers consider the world to be made up of energy that takes particular configurations but is continually changing.

7. The Buddhists contend that there are no distinct things in the world. Everything that seems to exist is only a fleeting appearance within an interdependent whole.

8. Some Buddhists (the Mahayana school) go further and claim that the only reality is the metaphysical substratum, or "emptiness," on which the apparent things of the world float.

IV. Having considered several of the world's philosophical traditions, we are in a position to recognize that the similarities and differences among them tend to be matters of emphasis, not straightforward oppositions. We should be cautious about over-simplified comparisons.

A. Central concepts in the various traditions usually occur in clusters. The meaning of "person," for example, is not the same in the Western, Confucian, American Indian, or Yoruba traditions, because in each case, it is shaped by a number of societal beliefs.

B. An interesting parallel among several traditions (Western, Daoist, and Buddhist) is a suspicion that words can mislead us. This is certainly the case when we fail to appreciate the cultural context from which a term is abstracted.

V. Precisely because the different traditions have different emphases and cast different lights on basic question, they have much to offer one another. We can expect humanity's future answers to philosophical questions to be enriched by previous thought from around the globe.

**Essential Reading:**

**Questions to Consider:**
1. Do you think Nishitani's answer to the modern search for meaning would work for contemporary Westerners? Why or why not?
2. Are there any philosophical positions of which you have become aware through this course that you think might serve as resources for current problems in our world?
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Time Period</th>
<th>Event</th>
<th>Location</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>30,000 B.C.E.</td>
<td>Cave paintings</td>
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<tr>
<td>10,000</td>
<td>Emergence of agricultural societies</td>
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<tr>
<td>ca. 3000</td>
<td>Construction of megalithic tombs, such as New Grange in the Boyne Valley of Ireland [EUROPE]</td>
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<td>2620–2480</td>
<td>Great Pyramids built in Egypt [AFRICA]</td>
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<tr>
<td>ca. 2000</td>
<td>Erection of Stonehenge solar observatory [EUROPE]</td>
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<td>ca. 1700–1100</td>
<td>Shang Dynasty [CHINA]</td>
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<td>ca. 1600</td>
<td>Hammurabi’s Code established in Babylon [MIDDLE EAST]</td>
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<td>1500–900</td>
<td>Rise of Olmec civilization in Mesoamerica [THE AMERICAS]</td>
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<tr>
<td>1367–1350</td>
<td>Pharaoh Amenhotep IV (Aknaton) of Egypt adopted a new religion, involving worship of a universal god, Aton, the sun [AFRICA]</td>
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<tr>
<td>1200–900</td>
<td><em>Rig Veda</em> written (except the tenth book) [INDIA]</td>
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<tr>
<td>1050–256</td>
<td>Zhou (Chou) Dynasty, the period that Confucius considered a Golden Age [CHINA]</td>
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<td>ca. 1000</td>
<td>Hebrew Decalogue established [MIDDLE EAST]</td>
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<tr>
<td>700–300</td>
<td><em>Upanishads</em> written [INDIA]</td>
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<td>600s</td>
<td>Legendary beginning of Samkhya system by Kapila [INDIA]</td>
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<td>400s–300s</td>
<td>Beginning of Buddhism [INDIA]</td>
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<td>400s–200s</td>
<td>The Hundred Schools period—the flourishing of many schools of Chinese thought, including Mohism, Confucianism, and Daoism, among others [CHINA]</td>
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<td>403–221</td>
<td>Warring States Period, the development of Confucianism [CHINA]</td>
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<td>300–1500</td>
<td>Middle and late <em>Upanishads</em> written [INDIA]</td>
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<tr>
<td>221–206</td>
<td>Dynasty of Qin Shi Wangdi (Ch’in Shih Huangdi) (d. ca. 210 B.C.E.), the first Emperor of China, who unified the nation and standardized writing and currency [CHINA]</td>
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<td>200</td>
<td>Earliest part of the <em>Bhagavad Gita</em> [INDIA]</td>
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<td>200–100</td>
<td>Theravada and Mahayana Buddhism diverge [INDIA]</td>
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<td>ca. 5</td>
<td>Birth of Jesus Christ [MIDDLE EAST]</td>
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<td>First century</td>
<td>Buddhism arrives in China [CHINA]</td>
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<td>ca. 150</td>
<td>Nagarjuna’s “Averting the Arguments” written [INDIA]</td>
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<tr>
<td>200–900</td>
<td>The era of Mayan domination of Mesoamerica [THE AMERICAS]</td>
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<td>300–400</td>
<td>Final redaction of the <em>Yoga-sutra</em> (attributed to Patanjali) [INDIA]</td>
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<td>400</td>
<td>Latest part of the <em>Bhagavad Gita</em> [INDIA]; high point of Teotihuacan, the first true capital of Mexico, when it had a population of over 200,000 people [THE AMERICAS]</td>
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<td>500s</td>
<td>Buddhism arrives in Japan [JAPAN]; Muhammad’s <em>hijrah</em> (flight) from Mecca to Medina, the historical beginning of Islam [MIDDLE EAST]</td>
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<td>ca. 700–750</td>
<td>Advaita Vedanta developed by Shankara [INDIA]</td>
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<td>794–1185</td>
<td>Heian period [JAPAN]</td>
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<td>830–930</td>
<td>Dissolution of the Mayan civilization [THE AMERICAS]</td>
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<td>845</td>
<td>Suppression of Buddhism in China [CHINA]</td>
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<tr>
<td>ca. 1000</td>
<td>Mahmud of Ghazni invades Indian subcontinent, bringing Islamic rule [INDIA]</td>
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<tr>
<td>ca. 1000</td>
<td><em>Pillowbook</em> of Sei Shonagon written [JAPAN]</td>
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early 1100s .................................. Aztecs arrive in the Valley of Mexico [THE AMERICAS]

1101 .................................. Beginning of Rinzai sect of Ch'an/Zen Buddhism [CHINA]

1185–1333 .................................. Kamakura Period and the beginning of Shogun rule; revitalization of Buddhism in Japan; the Rinzai school of Zen arrives from China [JAPAN]

1300s .................................. Incas begin to expand into neighboring territory [THE AMERICAS]

1325 .................................. Aztecs found city of Tenochtitlan [THE AMERICAS]

1333–1568 .................................. Muromachi Period, a period of warfare and further rule by the shogunate [JAPAN]

1375–1527 .................................. Italian Renaissance [EUROPE]

1400s .................................. European voyages of exploration [EUROPE]; beginning of colonialism in Africa [AFRICA]; Incas develop huge empire [THE AMERICAS]

1424 .................................. General Tlacaelel has Aztec history rewritten to support a militaristic view of reality [THE AMERICAS]

1492 .................................. Columbus reaches America [THE AMERICAS]

Late 1400s .................................. The Renaissance begins [EUROPE]

1500s–1600s .................................. Scientific revolution [EUROPE]

1500 .................................. Climax of Aztec conquest of Mexico [THE AMERICAS]

1517 .................................. Martin Luther nails his *Ninety-five Theses* criticizing the Church on the door of the Wittenberg Cathedral, the first step toward precipitating the Protestant Reformation [EUROPE]

1519 .................................. Hernando Cortés enters the Aztec capital, Tenochtitlan [THE AMERICAS]

1521 .................................. Cortés defeats the Aztecs and names their empire “New Spain” [THE AMERICAS]

1532 .................................. Francisco Pizarro’s invasion of the Inca Empire [THE AMERICAS]

1543 .................................. Portuguese arrive in Japan [JAPAN]; publication of Copernicus’s *On the Revolutions of the Heavenly Spheres* [EUROPE]

1555 .................................. Peace of Augsburg establishes a religious division of European Christendom [EUROPE]

1587 .................................. Catholic missionaries banned from Japan [JAPAN]

1600–1688 .................................. Tokugawa (Edo) Period, a time when the arts of *kabuki* theater, puppet theater, and *ukiyo* prints flourished [JAPAN]

1635 .................................. Ban on Japanese travel abroad [JAPAN]

1839–1842 .................................. Opium War between England and China, which resulted in Chinese defeat [CHINA]

1853 .................................. Perry arrives in Japan [JAPAN]

1884 .................................. Berlin conference dividing Africa among European nations [AFRICA]

1919 .................................. May Fourth protest by students against European interference in Chinese affairs [CHINA]

1949 .................................. People’s Republic of China founded [CHINA]

1950s–1960s .................................. African nations declare independence from European rule [AFRICA]
Glossary

Advaita: (Sanskrit) non-dual.

Advaita Vedanta: a monistic school of Brahmanic thought that asserts that only Brahman exists.

Anatman: (Sanskrit) the Buddhist doctrine that there is no substantial self.

Anitya: (Sanskrit) the Buddhist doctrine that everything is impermanent.

Apeiron: the indefinite, according to pre-Socratic philosopher Anaximander, and the basic, unchanging substance of which other, changing things are made.

Arhat: (Sanskrit) one whose attainments are worthy of nirvana. This is the spiritual goal, according to Theravada Buddhism.

Artha: (Sanskrit) literally, what can be perceived through the senses. As one of the aims of life, according to traditional Indian thought, it refers to material possessions.

Ashe: (Yoruba) spiritual power to make things happen, originating in the Supreme God but present in all natural beings and entities.

Asramas: (Sanskrit) the four stages of the human life cycle.

Atman: (Sanskrit) the supreme Self, which is identical in everyone.

Avidya: (Sanskrit) ignorance. This term is used in both Brahmanism and Buddhism, both of which consider ignorance a primary spiritual obstacle.

Bhagavad Gita: the “Song of the Blessed Lord,” a segment of the Mahabharata, an Indian epic that was composed around 500 B.C.E. Most of the Bhagavad Gita is presented in the voice of Krishna, an avatar of Vishnu who appears as the charioteer of Arjuna, a central character in the Mahabharata.

Bhakti: (Sanskrit) devotion. Krishna, in the Bhagavad Gita, advocates a spirit of devotion to a deity, specifically the deity Vishnu, whom he identifies with Brahman.

Bodhisattva: (Sanskrit) a person who has reached enlightenment but forgoes final nirvana (which would extinguish his or her personality) to remain in the world to help others attain enlightenment. This is the spiritual goal, according to Mahayana Buddhism.

Brahman: (Sanskrit) the absolute being of reality; the One.

Brahmanism: classical and pre-classical religion of the Indian subcontinent.

Buddha: the enlightened one. This term is used, in particular, to refer to Siddhartha Gautama, the founder of Buddhism. Mahayana Buddhists also use it to refer to other enlightened beings throughout history.

Buddha-nature: the metaphysical substratum that is the only reality, supporting apparent phenomenon. The Buddha-nature is also referred to as the “thusness” and “the Void.”

Buddhi: (Sanskrit) the impersonal intellect that is our faculty of awareness, according to the Samkhya school.

Calimac: (Nahuatl) the schools of higher learning, attended by those who would become nobles or priests, run by the tlalanimes.

Carvaka: (Sanskrit) a school of Indian thought that was materialistic and skeptical. The Carvaka thinkers insisted that the material world was the only reality and denied that any aspect of the person survived death.

Categorical imperative: according to Immanuel Kant, a statement expressing the entirety of the moral law. Kant’s various formulations of the categorical imperative serve as means for testing the moral appropriateness of a contemplated action.

Chakras: (Sanskrit) the seven psychic centers of the physical body, through which the subtle body works.

Chan Buddhism: one of the major Chinese sects of Buddhism that continued beyond the persecution of Buddhism in 345 C.E. The southern school of this sect, which claimed that enlightenment could be sudden, spread to Japan, where it developed as Zen Buddhism.

Cheng ming: (Chinese) the attunement of names. This Confucian notion means that words (including official titles) should correspond to realities.

Cogito: (Latin) “I think,” the opening word of Descartes’ argument “I think, therefore I am.” The word cogito is used as a summary term for the entire argument.

Conventional truth: according to the Buddhist two-truths doctrine, defended by Nagarjuna, the truth relative to the way we experience things. Conventional truth is not, however, truth in an absolute sense.

Culturalism: the view that philosophy is relative to the social and historical context in which it is produced.

D Ao: (Chinese) the “Way,” a term used to mean different things by different schools. The Daoists use the term to refer to the fundamental flow of nature and all things in it. The Confucians use the term to refer to the life of virtue.

Daoism: school of Chinese thought that aims at a return to oneness with nature through a stance of receptivity and the elimination of preconceptions.

determinism: the view that human life is shaped by forces that are not controlled by human beings. This view denies or restricts the role of human freedom in controlling a person’s destiny.
dharma: (Sanskrit) law, duty. *Dharma* is the third of the four aims of life (the *purusharthas*), according to traditional Indian thought. The term is also used to refer to the duties associated with specific social roles, the key ethical concept in traditional Indian thought.

dharmas: (Sanskrit) in Buddhist thought, the brief aggregates of causes and effects that create impressions of independently existing “things.”

dualism: the view that there are two fundamental substances or principles that give form to reality or some aspect of reality.

dukkha: (Sanskrit) trouble, pain, or suffering, including emotional and psychological distress. The Buddha uses this term to articulate the character of life in the First Noble Truth.

emptiness: See *sunya*.

epistemology: the study of the grounds of knowledge and the means for attaining it.

essence: according to Aristotle, the basic structure that makes a particular thing an instance of a particular kind.

ethnosophy: a term used, sometimes disparagingly, to refer to efforts to construct systematic philosophical accounts of the often implicit worldviews of a society, most often by someone outside the society.

Forms: according to Plato, the ultimate reality, the prototypes that things in the material world imperfectly copy.

Four Noble Truths: the central insights of Buddhism, concerned with the nature of suffering and the means to overcome it.

guna: (Sanskrit) literally, strand. The three *gunas* are the three aspects that, in various combinations, compose the things of material reality (*prakriti*). The *gunas* are also the aspects that combine to form human psychological life.

henotheism: the belief that a single God appears in various divine forms.

Hinduism: initially a geographical term to refer to those who lived East of the Ganges River in Pakistan. This term refers generally to Brahmanic (non-Islamic) schools of Indian thought.

Hua-yen Buddhism: one of the three major philosophical schools of Chinese Buddhism. It did not survive the persecution of 845 C.E.

idealism: the position that the world as we experience it is produced or structured by the mind.

Ihuyotl: (Nahuatl) the life force that gave bravery and other dispositions, including happiness, according to Aztec belief. It resided in the liver, and it made its possessor attractive to others.

ikebana: (Japanese) the art of flower arranging.

illusionism: the position that what we normally experience is illusory.

interdependent arising: (in Sanskrit, *pratityasamutpada*) the Buddhist doctrine that everything exists only relative to other things. Only the whole exists; the “parts” have no independent reality.

jiva: (Sanskrit) the individual self, the basis for personal identity and the connection between conscious states and memories.

kama: (Sanskrit) pleasure and love. According to traditional Indian thought, this is the second of the four aims of life (the *purushartha*).

karma: (Sanskrit) literally, action. *Karma* refers to the ongoing tendencies that are occasioned by actions, both psychological dispositions and tendencies to behave in certain ways. This idea is central in both Brahmanism and Buddhism.

karma-yoga: (Sanskrit) the yoga of selfless action, recommended by Krishna to Arjuna in the *Bhagavad Gita*.

klexes: (Sanskrit) afflictions, or hindrances to spiritual liberation, that result from bad action.

koans: (Japanese) a verbal puzzle or logical conundrum, used in the Rinzai school of Zen Buddhism to startle the practitioner into sudden enlightenment.

Kyoto School: twentieth-century school of Japanese thought that drew from Western thought as well as its own tradition. Nishida Kitaro and Nishitani Keiji were among its prominent members.

li: (Chinese) ritual action, one of the central virtues of Confucianism.

liberation philosophy: a Latin American philosophical movement in recent decades that urges attention to the perspective of the marginalized and the development of a more just approach to the relationship between the nations of the northern hemisphere and those of the southern hemisphere.

liberation theology: a movement in the Catholic Church, begun in Latin America, that interprets the essence of Christianity as being a “preferential option for the poor.” This involves the attempt to appreciate the perspective of those who are impoverished, a commitment to working to enhance their well-being, and a “poverty of spirit,” a detachment from obsession with wealth and material goods.

Madhyamika: the Buddhist “School of the Middle Way,” founded by Nagarjuna.

Mahabharata: an Indian epic poem that is part of the *Smriti* (in Brahmanism, authoritative works but secondary to the *Vedas*).
Mahayana Buddhism: the form of Buddhist thought that is dominant in East Asia. Mahayana Buddhism acknowledges many Buddhas through history, emphasizes the Buddha’s compassionate example, and considers enlightenment available to the laity, as well as to those who live in monasteries and convents.

manas: (Sanskrit) the mind, a component of the psychic sense, according to the Sankhya school.

Marxism: philosophical system developed by Karl Marx. Marxism is materialistic, contending that human history is ultimately determined by the power relations involved in the control of the means of production of the material necessities of human life. According to Marx, history unfolds as a consequence of class conflicts, which are inevitable. The ultimate revolution will occur when the proletariat (the working class) rebels against the capitalist owners of the means of production. This revolution will result in the overthrow of capitalism and the institution of a society without socioeconomic classes.

maya: (Sanskrit) illusion, which is understood in Brahmanism to encompass all of phenomenal reality. At the same time, this illusory reality is identified with the self-transformative power of Brahman.

Mohism: (China) The school of thought founded by Mozi (Mo Tzu). Mozi defended the idea of universal love, without differentiating between those close to one and those more distant. Mozi also contended that moral choices should be made on the basis of what course of action will yield the best results.

moksha: (Sanskrit) spiritual release. This occurs when one sees through illusion to ultimate reality.

monism: the view that there is one fundamental substance or principle that gives form to reality or some aspect of reality.

mukti: (Sanskrit) liberation.

Natyasastras: (Sanskrit) compendia analyzing the performance arts and the emotions conveyed by means of them.

negritude: a mode of apprehending reality that is emotional and participatory, claimed to be characteristic of Africans and their descendants by Léopold Sédar Senghor and other members of the "negritude movement" of the 1930s.

nihilism: the absence or collapse of values.

nirvana: (Sanskrit) literally, extinction. In Buddhism, nirvana is the state in which selfish craving is extinguished. This state is achieved by one who is enlightened, and it occasions an end to the cycle of rebirth.

no-self doctrine: the Buddhist doctrine that denies that there is a substantial self, distinct from the interconnected whole.

noumenal world: the world as it is in itself, independent of the knowing mind, according to Immanuel Kant's philosophy.

Olmec: early civilization of the Mesoamerican region. Some believe that the Olmecs were the originators of the complex calendar system that was later modified by the Maya and other peoples of the region.

panentheism: the belief that a single spirit is manifest in each thing.

pantheism: the belief that God is not distinct from the universe.

particularism, ethical: the view that appropriate ethical behavior depends on the particular circumstances.

pensadores: (Spanish) thinkers. This term is used in reference to the public intellectuals of Latin America who reflect mainly on social and political issues.

phenomenal world: the world as it is experienced.

positivism: a philosophico-movement developed by Auguste Comte that asserted that human behavior is governed by natural laws and that society should be organized on the basis of these laws.

prakriti: (Sanskrit) nature, the material world, according to the Sankhya school of Indian thought.

purusha: (Sanskrit) According to the Sankhya school of Indian thought, consciousness. There are as many purushas as there are conscious beings.

purusharthas: (Sanskrit) the four aims of life, according to traditional Indian thought.

qi (ch'i): (Chinese) configured energy, the energy that makes up all things in the universe.

rajas: (Sanskrit) passion and activity. Rajas is one of the three gunas, the three aspects of reality, according to the Sankhya school and other schools of Indian thought.

realism: the view that what we experience, or some efficient cause of what we experience, has existence independent of the mind.

ren (jen): (Chinese) humanity, benevolence.

Rinzai Buddhism: A school of Chan Buddhism, begun in China and committed to the idea of sudden enlightenment. In Japan, this sect particularly emphasizes startling techniques for breaking through practitioners' preconceptions, such as the use of koans and spontaneous fighting between master and disciple.
Samkhya: (Sanskrit). Literally, “analysis” or “discrimination.” Samkhya is the name of an early, dualistic school of Indian thought that analyzed human psychology. The spiritual aim for human beings, according to this school, is the dissociation of consciousness from matter.

samsara: (Sanskrit) the chain of causation, which continues through the cycle of rebirth, according to Buddhist doctrine.

samskaras: (Sanskrit) residues left in the unconscious mind as a consequence of actions.

sattva: (Sanskrit) light, purity, and intelligence. Sattva is one of the three guṇas, the three aspects of reality, according to the Samkhya school and other schools of Indian thought.

Scholasticism: a medieval philosophical movement in Europe, grounded in Aristotle’s thought and devoted to using reason to enhance human understanding of Christian revelation.

Shinto: (Japan) the traditional religion of Japan, which attributes divinity to particular locations and natural objects.

skepticism: a stance of systematic doubt; alternatively, the conclusion that we do not have true knowledge.

Śruti: (Sanskrit) literally, “recollected.” The Śruti are authoritative in Brahmanic thought, but their authority is secondary to that of the Vedas. Among the Śruti are the epics the Mahabharata and the Ramayana.

Soto: one of the two major schools of Zen Buddhism. The Soto school accepts the idea of gradual enlightenment. (Rinzai, the other major school, accepts the idea of sudden enlightenment.)

Stoicism: a school of Hellenistic thought that sought to minimize emotional attachments and to direct one’s life entirely on the basis of reason.

subtle body: according to the Samkhya school, this is the alter ego that one can experience in dreams and mystical experiences. It is made up of the psychic sense in combination with the “trace elements” (sound, touch, form-color, taste, and smell). The subtle body survives death.

sunnāya: (Sanskrit) emptiness. Sunnāya is an important concept in Buddhism. It refers to the fundamental reality on which all apparent “things” rest. The Mahayana school of Buddhism considers enlightenment to involve awareness that only this “emptiness” is real and that seeming “things” are illusory.

tamas: (Sanskrit) darkness and inertia. Tamas is one of the three guṇas, the three aspects of reality, according to the Samkhya school and other schools of Indian thought.

taotie: monstrous mask motif that appears on bronzes of the Shang Dynasty in China, suggesting a being coming into form.

teyolia: (Nahuatl) the life force that provides emotion, memory, and knowledge, residing in the heart, according to Aztec belief.

Theravada Buddhism: the dominant form of Buddhism in southern Asia. Theravada Buddhists focus on the uniqueness of the historical Buddha and contend that monastic life is virtually essential for attaining enlightenment.

thusness: in Buddhist thought, the metaphysical substratum that is the reality underlying the apparent world that we experience, also known as “the Void” and “the Buddha-nature.”

Tiantai Buddhism: one of the three major philosophical schools of Chinese Buddhism. It did not survive the persecution of 845 C.E.

tlamatiname: (Nahuatl) literally, the “knowers of things.” The tlamatiname were the poet/philosophers of the Aztecs who preserved and taught the higher wisdom of the Aztec people.

tonalli: (Nahuatl) the animating life force, residing in the head, according to Aztec belief.

two-truths doctrine: Nagarjuna’s doctrine that there is a place for “conventional truth,” the “truth” about what we experience, even though this “truth” does not reflect fundamental reality.

universalism: the view that philosophy uses universal reason to establish the validity of its principles and that this endeavor is not relative to particular social or historical circumstances.

Upanishads: the most recent of the four components of the Vedas, consisting of philosophical and speculative reflections.

utilitarianism: the position that the moral test of contemplated actions should be the principle of utility, which holds that one should promote the greatest good for the greatest number.

Vedanta: (Sanskrit) alternative term for the Upanishads.

Vedantins: (Sanskrit) those who follow the Vedas. The term is sometimes used as a shortened way of referring to those who follow Advaita Vedanta.

Vedas: a body of works dating from as early as 1200 B.C.E. that are the central scriptures of Brahmanism.

Void, the: the emptiness of things (sunnāya). According to Nagarjuna, the ultimate truth.

Wakan Tank: (Lakota) the Great Spirit.

wicasa wakan: (Lakota) shaman, or holy man.
wu-wei: (Chinese) non-action, where action is understood to involve assertion.

xiao: (Chinese) filial piety, a central virtue according to Confucius.

yi: (Chinese) appropriateness, a central virtue of Confucianism.

yin and yang: (Chinese) literally, “the sunny side” and “the shaded side.” Yin and yang stand for any pair of opposites. Chinese thought emphasizes the mutual dependence of all opposites and the gradual transformation of opposites into each other, principles well illustrated by the relationship between “the sunny side” and “the shaded side.”

yoga: (Sanskrit) a classical school of Indian thought; also one of several methods of (often ascetic) spiritual discipline. Both have the aim of spiritual liberation.

Yoga-sutra: (Sanskrit) an aphoristic text attributed to Patanjali that summarizes the practices of yoga.

Zen Buddhism: Chan Buddhism as it developed in Japan.

ziran: (Chinese) spontaneity, or “self-so-ing” (i.e., being exactly as one is), a term for the ideal way of being, according to the Daoists.

Biographical Notes

Historical Figures

Anaximander (610–545 B.C.E.). Pre-Socratic philosopher who claimed that apeiron, the indefinite, which endures, was the fundamental substance underlying apparent, changing things.

Anaximenes (fl. 550 B.C.E.). Pre-Socratic philosopher who claimed that air is the fundamental substance and that other things are formed by means of the expansion and contraction of air.

Aristotle (384–322 B.C.E.). Ancient Greek philosopher. Although a student of Plato, he challenged some of Plato’s ideas. In particular, Aristotle denied that there was a transcendent world of Forms, arguing instead that the world is ordered according to natural kinds, each of which possesses an essential structure.

Augustine (345–430 C.E.). Early Christian philosopher and bishop of Hippo, in northern Africa. Augustine was particularly concerned to offer an explanation of how evil can exist in a world created by a good God. He also wrote one of the earliest autobiographies in the Western tradition, The Confessions, which chronicles the steps that led him to convert to Christianity.

Black Elk (1863–1950). Lakota elder whose religious teachings were recorded in literary form. They represent an early literary statement of an environmental ethic.

Bodhidharma (d. 520 C.E.). According to Zen tradition, the patriarch who brought Chan Buddhism to China.

Bondy, Augusto Salazar (1927–1974). Peruvian thinker whose work straddled hermeneutics, the analytical tradition, and certain Marxist ideas. Bondy was concerned with the issue of the cultural identity of Latin American philosophy. He was a culturalist, who insisted that philosophy always reflects the concrete circumstances of those who develop it, and that Latin America should develop a non-derivative philosophical tradition that dealt with the real experiences of Latin America.

Caso, Antonio (1883–1946). Anti-positivistic Mexican philosopher who defended the notion that charitable action is the freest and most fulfilling action possible for human beings. Caso also defended the importance of aesthetic creativity, which expressed human freedom and was intrinsically valuable, not determined by ulterior motives.

Comte, Auguste (1793–1857). French philosopher who founded the movement called “positivism,” which aimed to systematize scientific laws of human behavior and construct social institutions on the basis of these laws.
Confucius (Kong Fu Zi, or K’ung Fu Tzu) (551–479 B.C.E.). Ancient Chinese philosopher whose influence extends throughout East Asia. Confucius advocated moral self-cultivation as the way to become an exemplary person, the observance of traditional rituals, and rulership by moral example.

Copernicus, Nicholas (1473–1543). Renaissance scientist who revolutionized scientific thought with his defense of the claim that the sun, not the earth, is the center of the world.

Democritus (460–370 B.C.E.). Ancient Greek philosopher who proposed that observable things were composed of atoms, tiny particles that could not be further subdivided.

Descartes, René (1596–1650). French philosopher who defended reason as the means to certain knowledge. He is particularly famous for his proof “I think, therefore I am” (the cogito) and his differentiation between mind and body as distinct kinds of substances.

Deistua, Alejandro Octavio (1849–1945). Peruvian philosopher and educator best known for his ethical and aesthetic thought. Reversing the positivist hierarchy of values, Deistua defended the primacy of freedom over order and the fundamental importance of aesthetic value as the most undiluted expression of human beings’ creative freedom.

Diop, Cheikh Anta (1923–1986). Contemporary Senegalese historian who defends the view that philosophy is implicit in many societal practices, including artistic productions, economic arrangements, and political institutions.

Dogen Kigen (1200–1253). Japanese Zen master, considered the founder of the Soto school. He wrote the first major Buddhist treatise in Japanese, the Shobogenzo (Treasury of the True Dharma Eye).

Dussel, Enrique (b. 1934). Contemporary Argentinian philosopher who is a major proponent of liberation philosophy. Dussel encourages appreciation of the perspectives of marginalized peoples of the world and the development of more equitable approaches to the economic relationships between the peoples of the northern and southern hemispheres.

Fanon, Frantz (1925–1961). Thinker from Martinique whose experiences as a practicing psychiatrist in Algeria led him to theorize about the nature of colonialism. According to Fanon, colonialism is premised on the colonizer’s view of the colonized as non-human and the internalization of this view by the colonized. According to Fanon, violence (which Fanon understands as the violation of all the boundaries erected by the colonizer) is essential if the colonized are to reassert their humanity.

Heidegger, Martin (1889–1976). German philosopher who rejected mind/body dualism and attempted to articulate the nature of being from the point of view of a particular being already within the world (which he called Dasein, literally “being-there”).

Heraclitus (ca. 535–470 B.C.E.). Pre-Socratic philosopher who claimed that change is the basic nature of things.

Hountondji, Paulin (b. 1942). Professor of philosophy at the National University of Benin who helped reestablish democracy in Benin after the fall of a military regime that ruled his country for twenty years. Hountondji is a critic of ethnophilosophy who defends the universality of philosophical aims and methods, which he associates with scientific objectivity. Hountondji insists that philosophical ideas must be written in order to function as philosophy in the traditional sense.

Kant, Immanuel (1724–1804). German philosopher who argued that we can know the structure of the phenomenal world because our own minds impose order on it, but that we cannot know the noumenal world (the world “in itself”).

Kapila (seventh century B.C.E.). Legendary founder of the Samkhya system of Indian thought.

Lame Deer (1903–1984). Lakota elder whose ideas were recorded in literary form. Lame Deer emphasizes the cyclical patterns of nature and the interconnections among the earth and its inhabitants.

Luther, Martin (1483–1546). Translator of the Bible into German and initiator of the Protestant Reformation. Philosophically, Luther was particularly influenced by St. Paul and St. Augustine. He argued that human beings are inherently sinful and torn between the flesh, with its desires, and the spirit. He also contended that salvation could not be achieved by means of good works but could result only from God’s grace.

Mariátegui, José Carlos (1894–1930). Peruvian thinker who considered the Inca economic system to be a form of communism and anticipated that the descendents of the Incas would bring about a revolution in modern Peruvian society. He advocated the return of land to the Indians and the reorganization of the Inca system of distribution.

Marx, Karl (1818–1883). Nineteenth-century German philosopher who argued that historical change is the consequence of economic forces. He predicted a communist revolution in which the proletariat, the working class in industrial society, would rebel against the capitalists who owned the means of production and that the result would eventually be a classless society.

Mbiti, John (b. 1931). Contemporary Kenyan theologian. He is sometimes classified as an ethnosopher, because his accounts of traditional African beliefs are motivated by the aspiration to propagate Christianity.

Mencius (Meng Tzu, or Mengzi) (372?–298? B.C.E.). Confucian philosopher who lived approximately 100 years after Confucius. Mencius claims that the
human heart/mind naturally contains the seeds of goodness, which will flourish with proper cultivation.

Mozi (Mo Tzu) (479–381 B.C.E.). Ancient Chinese thinker who preached universal love, without special treatment of family members, and moral decision making on the basis of what course of action would yield the best consequences. Despite his doctrine of universal love, however, Mozi promoted the use of armed force when necessary to secure order.

Nagarjuna (ca. 150–200 C.E.). Indian Buddhist philosopher who used rational argumentation with the aim of pointing toward a vision that transcends reason.

Nietzsche, Friedrich (1844–1900). German philosopher most famous for his statement, “God is dead,” and for his image of the “superman” (Übermensch), a type of being that would transcend contemporary humanity. Nietzsche’s philosophy concerned what he saw as the modern crisis of values that he termed “nihilism” and his reflections on how humanity might recover from this situation.

Nishitani, Keiji (1900–1990). Japanese philosopher and member of the twentieth-century Kyoto school. Nishitani was a comparativist, drawing on the Western and Chinese, as well as the Zen, traditions.

Oruka, Henry Odera (1939–1995). Contemporary African philosopher who classified the philosophical approaches in contemporary African thought into four categories. Oruka contended that although many traditional African thinkers were insufficiently critical of their societies to be philosophers in the strict sense, Africa had its share of philosophical sages, who were genuine philosophers, in earlier times.

Parmenides (fl. 500–450). Pre-Socratic philosopher who asserted that only eternal things are real and that, accordingly, change does not exist. The everyday world that appears to change is, according to Parmenides, illusory.

Patanjali (second century B.C.E.). Legendary compiler of the Yoga-sutra about whom little else is known.

Plato (ca. 427–347 B.C.E.). Ancient Greek philosopher who wrote dialogues featuring the figure of his actual teacher, Socrates. Although the relationship between Plato and his character Socrates is subject to debate, the dialogues suggest that Plato believed that this world and its contents are reflections of eternal prototypes called the Forms and that insight into the Forms constitutes wisdom.

Pythagoras (ca. 581–507). Pre-Socratic philosopher from Samos who discovered that strings of simple intervals vibrate in harmony with one another. Pythagoras contended that number is the basic principle underlying the order of the universe.

Sahrawardi, Yahya al- (d. 1191). Persian philosopher and Sufi sheik. Al-Sahrawardi held that light is the foundation of the world and that God is the Supreme Light. Knowledge, on his account, is an intuition of light, literally an illumination. He drew on Western ideas in his interpretation of Islam, particularly neo-Platonic ideas. He was executed for heresy.

Sei Shonagon (b. 966 C.E.). Lady-in-waiting to the Heian empress and author of a diary, or “Pillowbook,” that is one of the great works of Japanese literature.

Senghor, Léopold Sédar (b. 1906). A poet and political leader in Senegal. Senghor was a proponent of the negritude movement, which he helped to found. Negritude is the notion of a distinctive mode of apprehending reality, characteristic of Africans and descendents of Africans, that is emotional and participatory, as opposed to the European approach of disinterested analysis. Senghor was the president of Senegal for over twenty years. He defended socialism as the social and ethical system that is logically continuous with negritude.


Siddhartha Gautama (fourth–fifth centuries B.C.E.). The historical Buddha, also known as Shakymuni. Siddhartha Gautama began life as a sheltered prince. On discovering the reality of suffering, he devoted his life to seeking a solution. After experiments with asceticism and sensual indulgence, he achieved a vision of how to end the world’s suffering, which he formulated in the Four Noble Truths.

Socrates (469–399 B.C.E.). Ancient Greek philosopher, considered the “father” of Western thought. Socrates did not write texts but instead practiced philosophy through conversation. We know him through the accounts of his contemporaries, particularly the dialogues of his student Plato, most of which feature him as the central character. (Whether Plato sought to provide historically accurate portraits of Socrates is a matter of considerable debate. Most scholars think that the early dialogues are fairly accurate but that Plato gradually developed his own ideas, which he expressed through the Socrates of the later dialogues.)

Tempels, Placide (1906–1977). A Franciscan missionary from Belgium who worked in the Congo for almost thirty years. Tempels’s book, Bantu Philosophy, attempted a systematic account of the worldview of the Bantu peoples. As a missionary, Tempels’s work was motivated in large part by the aim of learning how to convey Christian doctrine to the Bantu. Although he treated the traditional views of the Bantu with more respect than did many of his contemporaries, his work has been criticized as a paradigm instance of an ethnophilosophical treatise written by someone from outside the culture being analyzed, implicitly supportive of colonialism.

Thales (624–546 B.C.E.). Pre-Socratic philosopher who claimed that water is the basic substance of which other things are composed.

Thomas Aquinas (1224–1274). Dominican priest and Doctor of the Catholic Church who produced a grand synthesis of Catholic doctrine and Aristotelian
philosophy. This synthesis also conjoined Christian thought with that of certain Islamic thinkers, because Thomas drew on some of Aristotle’s Islamic commentators.

Tlacaél (fifteenth century). Aztec general who revised Aztec history to reflect a more militaristic worldview in 1424.

Vasconcelos, José (1882–1959). Mexican philosopher and political activist who believed that a new “cosmic race,” descended from all four of the main racial groups in the world and committed to universal kinship, would appear in Latin American. After briefly defending positivism, Vasconcelos developed a philosophical position that countered positivism and defended the importance of emotion and aesthetic appreciation for understanding reality.

Xunzi (Hsun Tzu) (298–212 B.C.E.). Prominent Confucian and China’s first philosophical essayist, in the modern sense of the word. One of the essays attributed to Xunzi contends that human nature is essentially evil, or base. Xunzi was very pragmatic, but he continued to defend ritual as serving important psychological and social functions.

Yang Chu (fourth century B.C.E.). Early Daoist thinker who held that nothing was more valuable than life and is most noted for his extreme ethical egoism.

Zhuangzi (Chuang Tzu) (369?–B.C.E.). Early Daoist, often considered China’s greatest writer. Zhuangzi conveys Daoist ideas through stories, which are frequently quite startling.

Zhu Xi (Chu Hsi) (1130–1200). Neo-Confucian philosopher who drew on ideas from Buddhism and Daoism in his interpretation of Confucianism. He advocated a combination of studious inquiry and quiet sitting as the means of self-cultivation.

Mythological and Legendary Figures

Ajala. (Yoruba) Orisha who is the potter of inner heads.

Arjuna. Commander of the Pandavas (one of two warring families) and a major figure in the Bhagavad Gita and the Mahabharata, more generally.

HuitziloPOCHTLI. (Nahuatl) The war god of the Aztecs, who came to be considered identical to the sun god after General Tlacaél revised the history of the Aztecs in 1424.

Krishna. Avatar of Vishnu and major speaker in the Bhagavad Gita.

Nanhuatzin. (Nahuatl) One of the two gods who, according to Aztec myth, sacrificed themselves by jumping into the divine hearth of the gods at the end of the Fourth Sun. The current sun, the Fifth Sun, was understood to be a reincarnation of Nanhuatzin.

Olōrùn. (Yoruba) The Supreme God. In contemporary times, Olōrùn has been identified as the Christian God and the Muslim Allah.

Ometéotl. (Nahuatl) The supreme god of the Aztecs, a dual god who was both father and mother.

orishas. (Yoruba) the deputy gods of Olōrùn, the Supreme God. Traditionally, sacrifices are made to the orishas, not directly to the distant Supreme God, although prayers are offered to the latter.

Tecuciztecatl. (Nahuatl) One of the two gods who, according to Aztec myth, sacrificed themselves by jumping into the divine hearth of the gods at the end of the Fourth Sun. The sacrifice of Tecuciztecatl and Nanhuatzin enabled the Fifth Sun (the sun of the current era) to appear. Human beings were obliged to perform sacrifices to repay the gods.

Vishnu. The god of the Indian pantheon who sustains the world.
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African Philosophy


philosophical outlooks have affected art in five African cultures and how these, in turn, influenced artistic traditions in the Western hemisphere.


American Indian Philosophy
Allen, Paula Gunn. The Sacred Hoop: Recovering the Feminine in American Indian Traditions. Boston: Beacon Press, 1986. An anthology of essays by a Laguna Pueblo/ Sioux novelist, poet, and literary critic. The emphasis is on the non-patriarchal character of American Indian thought and practices, in which women often took the lead, as well as on the healing power of myth.


Overholt Thomas W., and J. Baird Callicott. Clothed-in-Fur and Other Tales: An Introduction to an Ojibwa World View, with Ojibwa texts by William Jones and forward by Mary B. Black-Rogers. Lanham, MD: University Press of America, 1982. An account of central features of the worldview of the Ojibwa tribe, showing how they are expressed through a number of traditional stories.

———. "American Indian Philosophy," in Solomon and Higgins, World Philosophy, pp. 188–218. A collection of readings spanning a range of Indian thought, including retellings of two Ojibwa stories, excerpts from Black Elk and Lame Deer, and a recent reflection on the origins of American Indian thought by M. Scott Momaday.

———, in Solomon and Higgins, From Africa to Zen, pp. 55–80. A survey of important themes common to many American Indian tribes' philosophies, with particular emphasis on the environmentalism of their worldviews.

Witherspoon, Gary. Language and Art in the Navajo Universe. Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 1977. An exploration of the metaphysical assumptions implicit in the Navajo language and the way these are manifested in various cultural practices. Particular emphasis is placed on the aesthetic and artistic manifestations of the Navajo understanding of reality.

Chinese Philosophy: Primary Sources


Hsin Tzu, Basic Writings. Translated by Bruce Watson. New York: Columbia University Press, 1963. A translation of some of the most influential essays by Xunzi, including the essay defending the idea that human nature is bad.

LaFargue, Michael. The Tao of the Tao-Te Ching. Albany: State University of New York, 1992. An annotated commentary of the Tao De Jing, with a section-by-section analysis of the sources of the text. LaFargue suggests that some of the passages in sections are quotations or paraphrases of what was received wisdom, with commentaries in other parts of the same sections.
Chinese Philosophy: Secondary Sources

Allan, Sarah. *The Shape of the Turtle: Myth, Art, and Cosmos in Early China*. Albany: State University of New York Press, 1991. This book considers the cosmology and art of the early Shang Dynasty (ca. 1700–1100 B.C.E.), the dynasty that later Chinese society treats as its model. Allan considers such artistic forms as the *taotie* mask on Shang bronzes as manifestations of a consistent system, which later eras reinterpreted.


Cook, Francis H. *Hua-yen Buddhism: The Jewel Net of Indra*. University Park: Pennsylvania State University Press, 1977. An account of the Chinese Hua-yen sect of Buddhism. The Buddhist doctrine of interdependent arising is explained with reference to an image from Indian mythology: that of the god Indra’s net, studded with gems in which all the other gems are reflected. Although the focus is Hua-yen Buddhism, this account is helpful for those seeking to understanding Buddhist thought more generally.

Fingarette, Herbert. *Confucius: The Secular as Sacred*. New York: Harper & Row, 1972. A fascinating guide to the Confucian project, which presents Confucius’s concerns as a response to his historical circumstances. Traditional Confucian virtues are explained with examples that are familiar to the modern Western reader.


Chinese approaches to understanding the order of the world, with particular emphasis on the implications of the aesthetic orientation of Chinese thought.


Indian Philosophy: Primary Sources

*The Bhagavad Gita: Krishna’s Counsel in Time of War*. Translated by Barbara Stoler Miller. New York: Bantam Books, 1986. A recent, accessible translation of the *Bhagavad Gita*, which includes an introduction that explains the context, a glossary of important terms, and an afterward about Thoreau’s interest in this Indian epic.


Phillips, Stephen H. “South Asian Philosophy,” in *Solomon and Higgins, World Philosophy*, pp. 65–119. A survey of major texts and schools in Indian thought, including excerpts from the *Vedas*, the Vedanta, the *Bhagavad Gita*, the *Yoga-sutra*, and Nagarjuna’s “Averting the Arguments,” as well as other selections.

Indian Philosophy: Secondary Sources

Deutsch, Eliot. *Advaita Vedanta: A Philosophic Reconstruction.* Honolulu: East-West Center Press, 1969. A thorough but succinct introduction to Advaita Vedanta, covering its basic doctrines and defenses of them. The book discusses the philosophical problems raised by the Advaita belief that there is only one thing and the Advaita solutions, particularly regarding the status of the world and that of the self. The book explains central terms in Advaita, keeping jargon to a minimum.


Potter, Karl. *Presuppositions of India’s Philosophies.* Englewood Cliffs, NJ: Prentice-Hall, 1963. An exploration of a number of philosophical topics, integrated around the themes of the quest for freedom and resignation as the route to attain it. Prominent consideration is given to the role of reason and speculation, self-knowledge, and causation in Indian thought.


Japanese Philosophy: Primary Sources (in translation)

Dogen Kigen. *Shobogenzo: Zen Essays by Dogen.* Translated by Thomas Cleary. Honolulu: University of Hawaii Press, 1986. A recent translation of thirteen chapters of Dogen’s most important work, which discusses Zen psychology and practices. Includes a helpful introduction summarizing Dogen’s biography and his teachings, particularly in the *Shobogenzo.*


Sei Shonagon. *The Pillow Book of Sei Shonagon.* Translated by Ivan Morris. London: Penguin, 1967. Includes helpful notes to explain the historical and cultural context, as well as illustrations indicating such things as the kind of clothing worn and the floor plans of imperial buildings.

Japanese Philosophy: Secondary Sources


Japanese and Western orientations toward nature. Japanese thought about nature is characterized as lacking sublimity, focusing on charming creatures, and reflecting the idea that human beings are part of nature.


Mesoamerican and Latin American Philosophy


Clendinnen, Inga. Aztecs: An Interpretation. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1991. A historical account of the Mexico (Aztec) people, seeking to make sense of the ritual killings of the Aztecs and the way they were understood by the ordinary member of the society. The book includes detailed discussion of the Aztec conception of art and poetry as means of gaining insight into a world more true than this one.


León-Portilla, Miguel. Aztec Thought and Culture. Translated by Jack Emery Davis. Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 1963. A clear and thorough discussion of the philosophical ideas of the Aztecs, with particular emphasis on the reflections of the tlatoani, the "knowers of things," who were responsible for the transmission of higher learning.


———. "Pre-Columbian and Modern Philosophical Perspectives in Latin America," in Solomon and Higgins, From Africa to Zen, pp. 81–100. A survey of philosophical developments in Mesoamerica and Latin America, beginning with the worldviews of the Aztecs, Maya, and Incas, and including discussion of contemporary developments.


Western Thought: Primary Sources

The following are excellent translations of some of the classics of Western philosophy:


Western Thought: Secondary Sources

Irwin, Terence. Classical Thought. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1989. An introduction to ancient Greek and Roman philosophy, focusing on major schools of thought and their important figures. This book aims to give an overview of the thought of this period for the layperson and does not presuppose background knowledge of philosophy.