

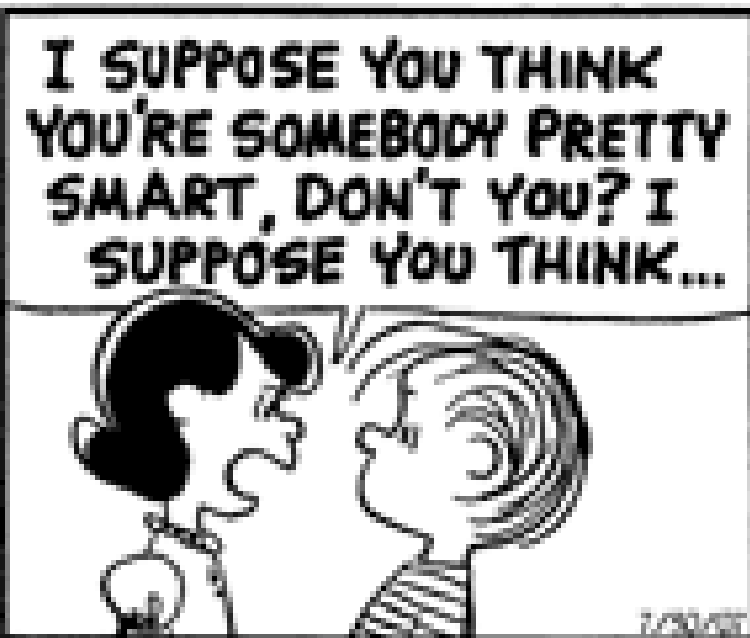
Comparative Religions

Why study them anyway?





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Nature of Religion

- ⇒ Humans ask big questions
- ⇒ we want to solve mysteries
— especially the mysteries of
the universe
- ⇒ Religion is one thing that
responds to these questions

⇒ **Other Responses:**

⇒ **Science**

⇒ **Philosophy**

⇒ **Non-Religious Spirituality**

⇒ **Rational Empiricism**

⇒ **Religions offer responses that are honed over time**



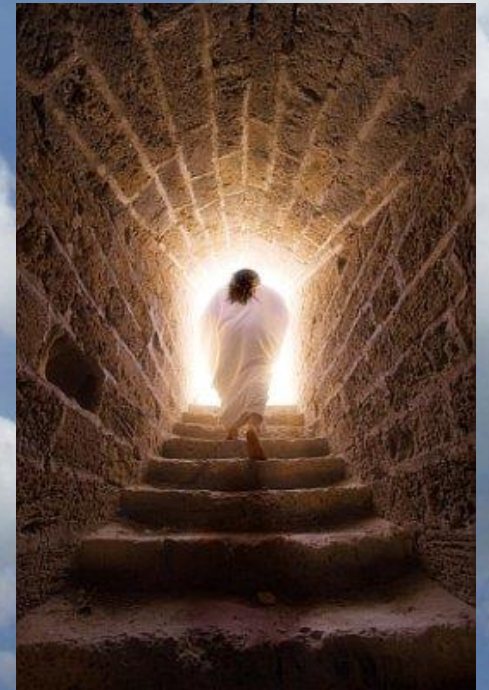
What is the Human Condition?

- ⇒ Are we just physical bodies?
- ⇒ Do we have a soul?
- ⇒ Are human beings good? Evil?
- ⇒ Why do we suffer?



What is Spiritual Perfection?

- ⇒ How do we fulfill our spiritual potential?**
- ⇒ What does God want us to do?**
- ⇒ What is ethical?**



⇒ How do we transcend the human condition?

⇒ Perfection in this life

⇒ How do we attain salvation?

⇒ Perfection after we die



OH YEAH! First to reach enlightenment... Right here, people! WOOOO BABY! Eat my dust, ladies!



PHIL.

What is Our Destiny?

- ⇒ **Where are we going?**
- ⇒ **Is there a master plan?**
- ⇒ **Do we have free will?**



**Your Destiny lies with
me Skywalker**

⇒ Are there a limited number of ultimate destinies?
⇒ Is there an ultimate destiny?



AN EVENTFUL PATH



WHAT'S MORE - IF YOU TRANSFER FROM YOUR PRESENT RELIGION **TODAY**, YOU'LL QUALIFY FOR OUR SPECIAL INTRODUCTORY OFFER OF FORGIVENESS OF ALL SINS AND GUARANTEED EVERLASTING LIFE!



www.christmadden.co.uk

CHRIS MADDEN.

What is the Nature of the World?

- ⇒ **Cosmology** – an understanding of the nature of the universe
- ⇒ **Where did the world come from?**
- ⇒ **Is the world real?**
- ⇒ **Is it sacred?**
- ⇒ **Is the world alive?**



⇒ **Is the world nothing but matter?**

⇒ **Does the world help us or get in our way?**

⇒ **What is the relationship between Religion and Science?**



What is the Ultimate Reality, and How is it Revealed?

⇒ Is there a God?

⇒ How do we experience God?

⇒ Divine Revelation?



⇒ **What is the nature of God?**

⇒ **Monotheism (one god)**

⇒ **Monolatry (belief in many gods worship of one)**

⇒ **Polytheism (many gods)**

⇒ **Pantheism (god > everything)**

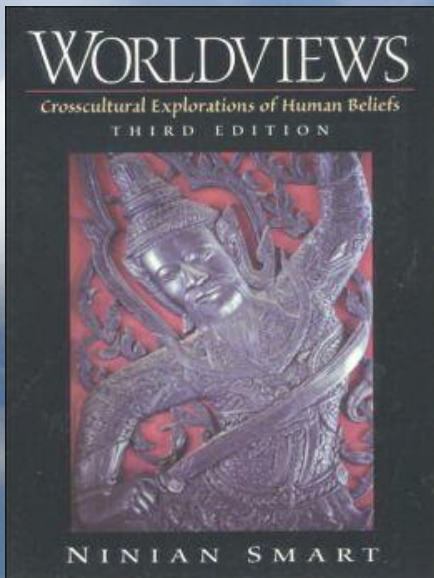
⇒ **Panentheism (god > everything, everything > god)**

Seven Dimensions of Religion



How Does a Religion Answer the Big Questions?

- ⇒ Different elements of religion answer these questions in different ways
- ⇒ Ninian Smart's 7 dimensions could be considered the basic elements of religion
- ⇒ 7 dimensions are not exclusive of each other



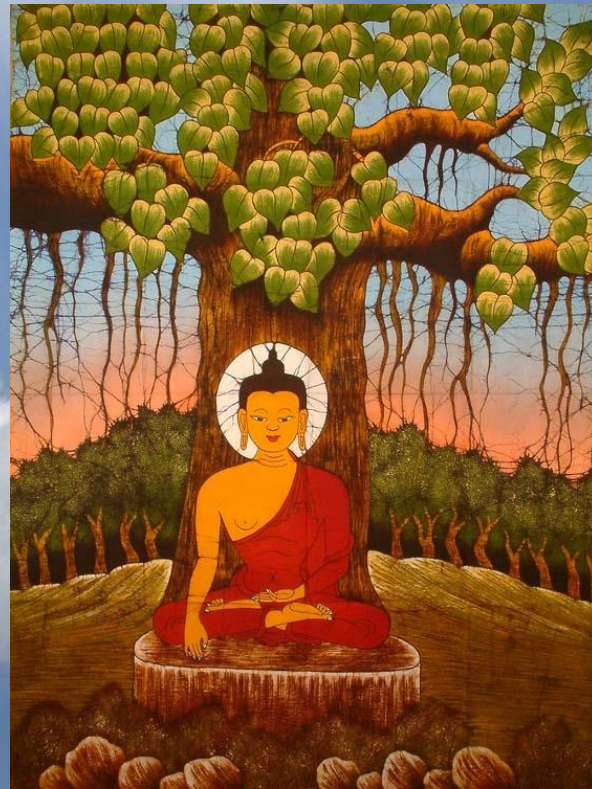
Experiential

- ⇒ Religious experience of individuals
- ⇒ This is how all religions begin
- ⇒ Faith is experiential (and a little doctrinal)



⇒ Individuals experiencing a god's self revelation (theistic religions only)

⇒ Mysticism— becoming one with or physically experiencing the divine



Mythic

- ⇒ Myth – a story that tends to answer questions of origins and is a source of sacred truth
- ⇒ Non-historical
- ⇒ Non-rational
- ⇒ Origin Stories
- ⇒ Passed down orally or in written scripture



Doctrinal

⇒ **Doctrine - Element of religious belief**

⇒ **Especially strong in creedal religions (ie. Christianity)**



- ⇒ **Doctrines originate in experience and myth**
- ⇒ **They help to make sense of experience and myth**
- ⇒ **Doctrines can be used as a litmus test for adherence to a particular religion**



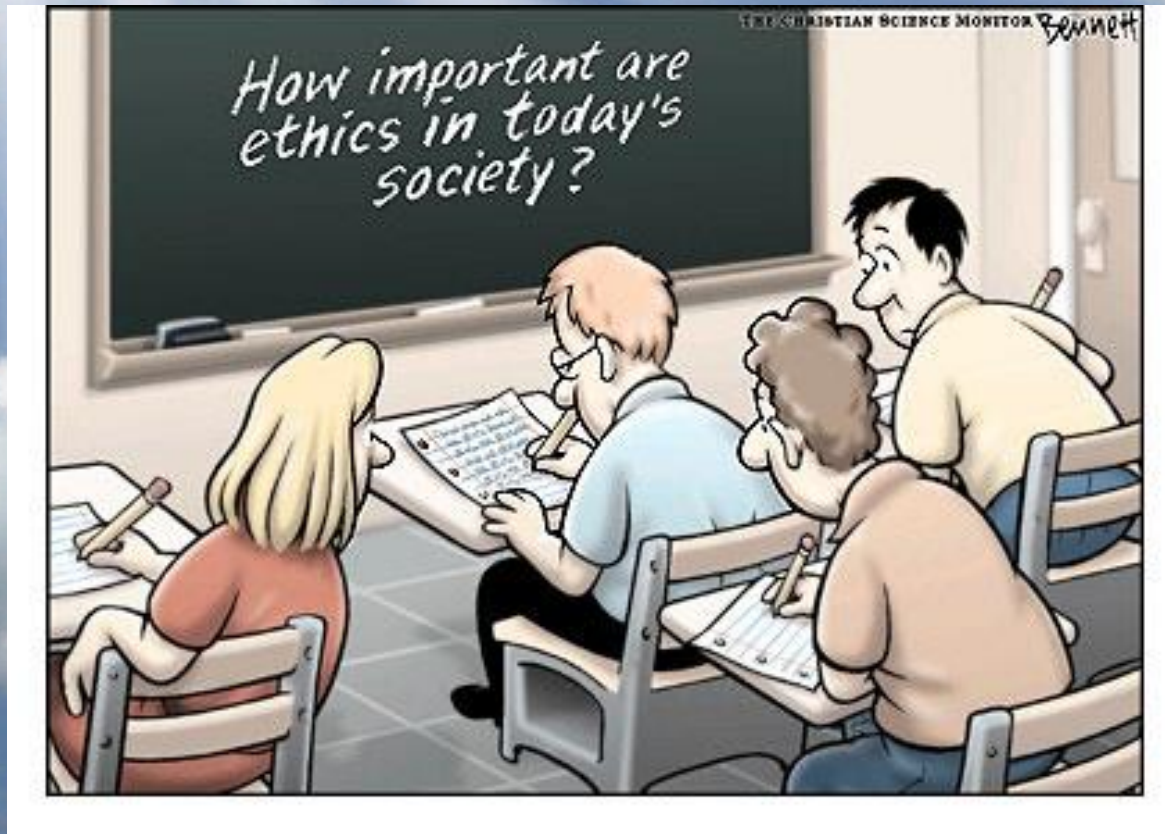
Ethical

- ⇒ **Ethics – The study that determines how we are to act while living in the world**
- ⇒ **Includes teachings about right and wrong**



⇒ **Social justice is part of this category**

⇒ **Also includes guidelines for violence (if any)**



Ritual

- ⇒ Ritual – Formal worship and religious practice
- ⇒ Many re-enact myths or sacred stories





Social

- ⇒ Communal aspect to religion
- ⇒ Human beings are, by their nature, communal



- ⇒ **We worship in communities**
- ⇒ **Shared experiences fortify religions**
- ⇒ **Organizational structure**
- ⇒ **Sometimes Hierarchical structure**



Material

- ⇒ Physical objects of a religion
- ⇒ Places/implements of worship.
- ⇒ Sacred art
- ⇒ Sacred entities
 - ⇒ Natural
 - ⇒ Of human construction



Questions About Studying World Religions

- ⇒ In a monotheistic religion, how can there be more than one true religion/god?**
- ⇒ Are all the religions saying essentially the same thing?**



⇒ Is there a basic agreement about truth?

⇒ Is the choice of a religion just personal preference?



2 Approaches to Studying World Religions

1) Comparative Methodology

- ⇒ To know one religion is to know none
- ⇒ Compare the different dimensions of religion
- ⇒ Look for the common questions all religions are answering

2) Approach with Empathy

- ⇒ Empathy – ability to see things from someone else's perspective**
- ⇒ We must use our imagination**
- ⇒ Don't judge the belief try to understand it from the believer's view**



What's in it for me?

- ⇒ **Knowledge about different responses to the fundamental religious questions**
- ⇒ **Wisdom from many different perspectives**



⇒ **Better understanding of your own faith tradition**

⇒ **Better understanding of people of other faith traditions**

