

Overview of Worldviews & Religions

Theism is a belief in the existence of one or a God, especially a personal God as Creator and Ruler of the universe.

Naturalism is the doctrine that all religious truths are derived from nature and natural causes, and not from any divine revelation.

Pantheism is the belief that God is in everything, God is impersonal, and abstract. Pantheism identifies the deity with the various forces and working of nature. It is the belief in, and worship of all gods.

Deism is a belief in the existence of a supreme being, specifically of a creator who does not intervene in the universe. The term is used chiefly of an intellectual movement of the 17th and 18th centuries that accepted the existence of a creator based on reason but rejected belief in a supernatural deity who interacts with humankind.

Source: <https://www.britannica.com/topic/Deism>

Materialism is a philosophy of **empiricism** - that physical matter in its movements and manifestations is the only reality, and that everything in the universe including thought, feeling, mind, and will, can be explained in terms of physical laws. The only valid test of truth is by scientific methods relying on quantifiable data, logic and physical observation and measurement. It can include the theory that physical well-being and worldly possessions constitutes the greatest good and the highest value in life

Edited Source: <https://www.csmedia1.com/317ministries.net/there-are-only-three-worldviews.pdf>

Atheism, in general, is the critique and denial of metaphysical beliefs in God or spiritual beings. As such, it is usually distinguished from theism, which affirms the reality of the divine and often seeks to demonstrate its existence. Atheism is also distinguished from agnosticism, which leaves open the question whether there is a god or not, professing to find the questions unanswered or unanswerable. The dialectic of the argument between forms of belief and unbelief raises questions concerning the most perspicuous delineation, or characterization, of atheism, agnosticism, and theism.

Source: <https://www.britannica.com/topic/atheism>

Agnosticism comes from Greek *agnōstos*, “unknowable” and, strictly speaking, is the doctrine that humans cannot know of the existence of anything beyond the phenomena of their experience. The term has come to be equated in popular parlance with [skepticism](#) about religious questions in general and in particular with the rejection of traditional Christian beliefs under the impact of modern scientific thought. The word agnosticism was first publicly coined in 1869 at a meeting of the [Metaphysical](#) Society in London by [T.H. Huxley](#), a British biologist and champion of the Darwinian theory of evolution. He coined it as a suitable label for his own position.

Source: <https://www.britannica.com/topic/agnosticism>

Traditional Religions & Worldviews

Christianity

Christianity, major religion stemming from the life, teachings, and death of Jesus of Nazareth (the Christ, or the Anointed One of God) in the 1st century CE. It has become the largest of the world's religions and, geographically, the most widely diffused of all faiths. It has a constituency of more than two billion believers. Its largest groups are the Roman Catholic Church, the Eastern Orthodox churches, and the Protestant churches.

Source: <https://www.britannica.com/topic/Christianity>

Islam

Islam is a major world [religion promulgated](#) by the Prophet [Muhammad](#) in Arabia in the 7th century CE.. The Arabic term *Islam*, literally “surrender,” [illuminates](#) the fundamental religious idea of Islam—that the believer (called a Muslim, from the active participle of *islām*) accepts surrender to the will of [Allah](#) (in Arabic, Allāh: God). Allah is viewed as the sole God—creator, sustainer, and restorer of the world. The will of Allah, to which human beings must submit, is made known through the [sacred](#) scriptures, the [Qur’ān](#) (often spelled Koran in English), which Allah revealed to his messenger, Muhammad. In Islam Muhammad is considered the last of a series of prophets (including [Adam](#), [Noah](#), [Abraham](#), [Moses](#), [Solomon](#), and [Jesus](#)), and his message simultaneously [consummates](#) and completes the “revelations” attributed to earlier prophets.

Retaining its [emphasis](#) on an uncompromising [monotheism](#) and a strict [adherence](#) to certain essential religious practices, the religion taught by Muhammad to a small group of followers spread rapidly through the [Middle East](#) to Africa, [Europe](#), the [Indian subcontinent](#), the [Malay Peninsula](#), and China. By the early 21st century there were more than 1.5 billion Muslims worldwide. Although many sectarian movements have arisen within Islam, all Muslims are bound by a common [faith](#) and a sense of belonging to a single [community](#).

Source: <https://www.britannica.com/topic/Islam>

Judaism

Judaism is a monotheistic religion developed among the ancient Hebrews. Judaism is characterized by a belief in one transcendent God who revealed himself to Abraham, Moses, and the Hebrew prophets and by a religious life in accordance with Scriptures and rabbinic traditions. Judaism is the complex phenomenon of a total way of life for the Jewish people, comprising theology, law, and innumerable cultural traditions.

Its primary Scriptures are the Torah - the first five books of the Bible - and the rabbinic commentaries contained in the Mishnah and Talmud. Judaism has a developed code of law called the *halakhah*, a complete system of laws and ordinances that have evolved since biblical times to regulate religious observances and the daily life and conduct of the Jewish people. The Jewish people trace Judaism as a continuous historic development from early ancestral beginnings to contemporary times in the diaspora and Israel.

Edited Source: <https://www.britannica.com/topic/Judaism>

Buddhism

Buddhism, religion and philosophy that developed from the teachings of the Buddha (Sanskrit: “Awakened One”), a teacher who lived in northern India between the mid-6th and mid-4th centuries BCE (before the Common Era). Spreading from India to Central and Southeast Asia, China, Korea, and Japan, Buddhism has played a central role in the spiritual, cultural, and social life of Asia, and, beginning in the 20th century, it spread to the West. Ancient Buddhist scripture and doctrine developed in several closely related literary languages of ancient India, especially in Pali and Sanskrit.

Source: <https://www.britannica.com/topic/Buddhism>

Buddhism was the third major belief system of ancient China. It was founded by Siddhartha Gautama, also called the Buddha, who lived in India around the sixth century B.C.E. Buddhism is a philosophy that focuses on personal development and attainment of deep knowledge. Buddhists seek to achieve enlightenment through meditation, spiritual learning, and practice. They believe in reincarnation and that life is impermanent and full of suffering and uncertainty; the way to find peace is through reaching nirvana, a joyful state beyond human suffering. There are many different sects that place different emphasis on various aspects of Buddhism. The two largest sects are Theravada Buddhism, which is found primarily in southern Asia, and Mahayana Buddhism, which is found in east Asia, including China.

After its founding in India, Buddhism spread to and became popular in China in the first century C.E. Part of the reason Buddhism became popular in China was because of Taoism. Some Buddhist practices were similar to Taoist ones, and Buddhist monks would use Taoist concepts to explain Buddhism to the Chinese, overcoming the cultural and language barrier between Indian and the Chinese people. Buddhism also influenced Taoism with its institutional structure, which Taoists copied and modified. A competition between Buddhism and Taoism arose to gain more followers and greater government influence, and this competition increased the vitality of both religions. As Buddhism became more prevalent, its concepts merged with Taoist and Confucian ideas to become the basis of ancient Chinese society and government. Its influence is seen in Chinese art, architecture, and literature.

Source: <https://education.nationalgeographic.org/resource/chinese-religions-and-philosophies>

Hinduism

Hinduism is a major world [religion](#) originating on the [Indian subcontinent](#) and [comprising](#) several and varied systems of [philosophy](#), belief, and [ritual](#). Although the name Hinduism is relatively new, having been coined by British writers in the first decades of the 19th century, it refers to a rich [cumulative](#) tradition of texts and practices, some of which date to the 2nd millennium BCE or possibly earlier. If the [Indus valley civilization](#) (3rd–2nd millennium BCE) was the earliest source of these traditions, as some scholars hold, then Hinduism is the oldest living religion on Earth. Its many [sacred](#) texts in [Sanskrit](#) and [vernacular](#) languages served as a vehicle for spreading the religion to other parts of the world, though ritual and the visual and performing arts also played a significant role in its transmission. From about the 4th century CE,

Hinduism had a dominant presence in [Southeast Asia](#), one that would last for more than 1,000 years. In the early 21st century, Hinduism had nearly one billion adherents worldwide and was the religion of about 80 percent of [India](#)'s population. Despite its global presence, however, it is best understood through its many distinctive regional [manifestations](#).

Source: <https://www.britannica.com/topic/Hinduism>

Confucianism

Though closer to a philosophy than a true religion, Confucianism was a way of life for ancient Chinese people, and it continues to influence Chinese culture today. The founder of Confucianism, named Confucius, lived from 551 to 479 B.C.E. He was a philosopher and political figure who lived during a time when traditional Chinese principles began to deteriorate under competing political states. He took older religious precepts and translated them into guidelines for social mores.

His teachings gave guidance on all levels of ancient Chinese life, from interactions between family members and in the public sphere, to educational standards and how states should be governed. Confucius saw every aspect of life as being made up of obligations between people and entities, and rituals to convey the mutual dependency between them. His teachings focused on humanism, including treating others the way you would want to be treated.

He taught that if everyone fulfilled their roles and obligations with respect and kindness towards others, it would build a stronger state. While religious rituals were mentioned alongside all the other rituals a person was expected to perform, Confucius did not focus on spiritual concerns like the afterlife, gods and goddesses, or mysticism. This is why Confucianism is considered a philosophy rather than a religion, even though it is often lumped in with other major religions.

Source: <https://education.nationalgeographic.org/resource/chinese-religions-and-philosophies>

Taoism

Taoism (also spelled Daoism) is a religion and a philosophy from ancient China that has influenced folk and national belief. Taoism has been connected to the philosopher Lao Tzu, who around 500 B.C.E. wrote the main book of Taoism, the *Tao Te Ching*. Taoism holds that humans and animals should live in balance with the Tao, or the universe. Taoists believe in spiritual immortality, where the spirit of the body joins the universe after death.

The *Tao Te Ching*, or "The Way and Its Power," is a collection of poetry and sayings from around the third and fourth centuries B.C.E. that guides Taoist thought and actions. While the author is traditionally believed to be the philosopher Lao Tzu, there is little evidence that Lao Tzu existed at all. Rather, the *Tao Te Ching* is a gathering of earlier sayings from many authors. This book was given an origin with the philosopher Lao Tzu for cultural and political reasons. Lao Tzu is sometimes understood as the image of the Tao, or a god, and given legendary status.

The Tao (or Dao) is hard to define but is sometimes understood as the way of the universe. Taoism teaches that all living creatures ought to live in a state of harmony with the universe, and the energy found in it. Ch'i, or qi, is the energy present in and guiding everything in the universe. The *Tao Te Ching* and other Taoist books provide guides for behavior and

spiritual ways of living in harmony with this energy. However, Taoists do not believe in this energy as a god. Rather, there are gods as part of the Taoist beliefs, often introduced from the various cultures found in the region known now as China. These gods are part of the Tao, like all living things. Taoism has temples, monasteries, and priests who make offerings, meditate, and perform other rituals for their communities.

One of the main ideas of Taoism is the belief in balancing forces, or *yin* and *yang*. These ideas represent matching pairs, such as light and dark, hot and cold, action and inaction, which work together toward a universal whole. Yin and yang show that everything in the universe is connected and that nothing makes sense by itself.

Taoism became well-known in the eighth century C.E. as the religion of the Tang dynasty. In the following centuries, it existed alongside Buddhism and Confucianism (another philosophical religion). However, during the Communist takeover in 1959, Taoism, Confucianism, and other religions were banned. This caused a decline in the practice of Taoism in China. Many modern Taoists live in Taiwan, although recent reforms in China have increased the number of Chinese Taoists.

Source: <https://education.nationalgeographic.org/resource/taoism>

The Taoist Center in Oakland: <https://thetaoistcenter.com/>

Native American religions

Native American religions are religious beliefs and sacramental practices of the [indigenous](#) peoples of [North](#) and [South America](#). Until the 1950s it was commonly assumed that the religions of the surviving [Native Americans](#) were little more than curious [anachronisms](#), dying remnants of humankind's childhood. These traditions lacked [sacred](#) texts and fixed doctrines or [moral](#) codes and were embedded in societies without wealth, mostly without writing, and without recognizable systems of politics or [justice](#) or any of the usual indicators of civilization. Today the situation has changed dramatically. Scholars of [religion](#), students of the ecological sciences, and individuals committed to expanding and deepening their own religious lives have found in these traditions many distinct and varied religious worlds that have struggled to survive but that retain the ability to inspire.

The histories of these worlds are also marked by loss. Five hundred years of political, economic, and religious domination have taken their toll. Scholars note when complex ceremonies become extinct, but often [community](#) members mourn even more the disappearance of small daily rituals and of religious vocabularies and grammars embedded in traditional languages—an erosion of memories that include not only formal sacred narratives but the [myriad](#) informal strands that once composed these tightly woven ways of life. Nevertheless, despite the [pervasive](#) effects of modern society, from which there is no longer any possibility of geographic, economic, or technological isolation, there are instances of remarkable [continuity](#) with the past, as well as remarkably creative [adaptation](#) to the present and anticipation of the future.

Modern Philosophies & Worldviews

Humanism

Humanism is a progressive philosophy of life that, without theism or other supernatural beliefs, affirms our ability and responsibility to lead ethical lives of personal fulfillment that aspire to the greater good.

– *American Humanist Association*

Humanism is a democratic and ethical worldview which affirms that human beings have the right and responsibility to give meaning and shape to their own lives. It stands for the building of a more humane society through an ethics based on human and other natural values in a spirit of reason and free inquiry through human capabilities. It is not theistic, and it does not accept supernatural views of reality.

– *Humanists International*

Humanism is an approach to life based on reason and our common humanity, recognizing that moral values are properly founded on human nature and experience alone.

– *The Bristol Humanist Group*

Humanism is the light of my life and the fire in my soul. It is the deeply felt conviction, in every fiber of my being that human love is a power far transcending the relentless, onward rush of our largely deterministic cosmos. All human life must seek a reason for existence within the bounds of an uncaring physical world, and it is love coupled with empathy, democracy, and a commitment to selfless service which undergirds the faith of a humanist.

– *Bette Chambers, former president of the AHA*

Source: <https://americanhumanist.org/what-is-humanism/definition-of-humanism/>

New Age

SBNR is related to [feminist](#) spiritual and religious thought and ecological spiritualities,^[23] and also to [Neo-Paganism](#), [Wicca](#), [Shamanic](#), [Druidic](#), [Gaian](#) and [ceremonial magic](#) practices.^[23] Some New Age spiritual practices include [astrology](#), [Ouija](#) boards, [Tarot](#) cards, the *I Ching*, and [science fiction](#).^[23] A common practice of SBNRs is [meditation](#), such as [mindfulness](#) and [Transcendental Meditation](#).^[23]

Paganism

Paganism is the ancestral religion of the whole of humanity. This ancient religious outlook remains active throughout much of the world today, both in complex civilizations such as Japan and India, and in less complex tribal societies world-wide. It was the outlook of the European religions of classical antiquity – Persia, Egypt, Greece and Rome – as well as of their “barbarian” neighbors on the northern fringes, and its European form is re-emerging into explicit awareness in the modern West as the articulation of urgent contemporary religious priorities.

The Pagan outlook can be seen as threefold. Its adherents venerate Nature and worship many deities, both goddesses and gods.

Source: <https://www.paganfederation.org/what-is-paganism/>

Spiritual but not Religious

Spiritual but not religious" (SBNR), also known as "**spiritual but not affiliated**" (SBNA), or less commonly "more spiritual than religious" is a popular phrase and initialism used to self-identify a [life stance](#) of [spirituality](#) that does not regard [organized religion](#) as the sole or most valuable means of furthering [spiritual growth](#).

Historically, the words *religious* and *spiritual* have been used synonymously to describe all the various aspects of the concept of religion,^[1] but in contemporary usage *spirituality* has often become associated with the interior [life](#) of the individual,^{[2][1]} placing an emphasis upon the [well-being](#) of the "[mind-body-spirit](#)",^[3] while *religion* refers to [organizational](#) or [communal](#) dimensions.^[4]

"Nones" - Nothing in Particular

Religious “none’s” – a shorthand we use to refer to people who self-identify as atheists or agnostics, as well as those who say their religion is “nothing in particular” – now make up roughly 23% of the U.S. adult population. This is a stark increase from 2007, the last time a similar Pew Research study was conducted, when 16% of Americans were “none’s.” (During this same period, Christians have fallen from 78% to 71%.)

”None’s” have made more gains through religious switching than any other group analyzed in the study.” Only about 9% of U.S. adults say they were raised without a religious affiliation, and among this group, roughly half say that they now identify with a religion (most often Christianity). But nearly one-in-five Americans (18%) have moved in the other direction, saying that they were raised as Christians or members of another faith but that they now have no religious affiliation. That means more than four people have become “none’s” for every person who has left the ranks of the unaffiliated.

Source: <https://www.pewresearch.org/fact-tank/2015/05/13/a-closer-look-at-americas-rapidly-growing-religious-nones/>