

FINAL

COSMOS *** III

Evolution – Beyond Materiality?

(Reviewing the Religious, Scientific
and Philosophic Domains
+ the New
Atheism).)

The Destiny of Man

By

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15 November 2026
Singapore

National Library Board, Singapore Cataloguing in Publication Data

Name(s): Pillay, Gerald F. 1934-

Title: Cosmos*** III Evolution - Beyond Materiality?/ Gerald F. Pillay.

Description: Singapore : Gerald F Pillay, 2026.

Identifier(s): ISBN: 978-981-94-5007-7 PDF

Subject(s): Origin of Universe, Life and Man, Destiny of Man, Philosophy of Science, Popular Science.

Classification: DDC

Publisher

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Printing and Publication

An e-book, 331 pages, self-published on 2 Dec 2026

at <https://geraldpillay.wordpress.com>

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Acknowledgements are not obligatory, but where appropriate would be appreciated.

Preface

Turning Points of Human Evolution So Far

Evolution has passed the baton on to Man to determine and attain his ultimate destiny. And the thrust of evolution was transferred at the **First Turning Point** to civilisation. The author perceives that human civilisation has since evolved in a number of giant steps.

The rise of Modern (Western) civilisation and the Scientific Revolution was the **Second Turning Point**. Homo Sapiens secured its likelihood to evolve as permanent species when it successfully cleared the **Third Turning Point** to form a Global Society, as recently as in the 1950s.

The proof has been that it has since moved with stupendous speed through the **Fourth Turning Point** to become the information-based Technological Society of today: Man is rapidly approaching the **Fifth Turning Point** to becoming fully a Technological Man, with quantum computing and artificial intelligence (AI), and doing previously impossible things with robotisation, like exploring the oceans and planets, the human body and the sub-atomic world.

Turning Point	From about (CE)	Evolution
	50,000	Emergence
1	9,000	Ancient Civilisations
2	16 th century	Modern Civilisation The Scientific Revolution
3	20 th Century	Global Society The Digital Age
4	21 Century	Technological Society The Quantum Age, AI, robotisation
5	21 st Century	Technological Man
		Knowledge Society

The author perceives that Man, living on the mental plane and with his widening grasp of reality, will finally become a **Knowledge Society (and civilisation)**, at which point if not before the “Metaphysical issues” will be his over-riding concern (see further on)

Purpose of this Volume

The central objective is to explore what Man’s destiny is, which he is responsible for bringing about.

The first step has been finding out whether there is a destiny Beyond Materiality (as appears to be offered by various religions). The study therefore focusses on the “Metaphysical issues”, whether there is a Supreme Being, and the Purpose of Man, which are the relevant factors in this perspective. In the second step, the study looks at what Man’s purely terrestrial destiny may be. Finally the study concludes what Man’s evolutionary pathways appear to be, and his options

The study approaches its quest by reviewing Man’s experience across these periods

- .(a) the religions-philosophies of the extant ancient civilisations
- .(b) the scientific-philosophic heritage of Western civilisation
- .(c) the general levels of relevant enquiry, knowledge and beliefs of contemporary civilisation

The Bottom Line

Intelligent man was a quantum leap,
Evolution continued thereafter through civilisation, with man in charge.
The study questions, inter alia, its terminal objective
and whether the next quantum leap
may be beyond materiality.

Overall Scope of the Study

The overall objective has been to understand the latest thinking on the origin and evolution of the cosmos and life, where evolution is heading, and the role and destiny of Man. The study looks for a grand design. there be one. It comprises these three volumes (see Genealogy).

COSMOS* - The Physical Universe

An historical survey of man's discovery of the universe. It summarises what we know today and looks to the future. Written in preparation for and timed with the launch of the James Webb Space Telescope (25 Dec 2021)

COSMOS II – Evolution From Microbe to Man**

The study does so in the **Part A – The Physical Universe** by reviewing the pre-biotic development of the universe, which may be thought of as the preparatory phase. The study seeks to understand the processes by which the pre-conditions for life came to be distributed and located on planet Earth. In fact, the first question arising is whether this was unique to the Earth.

The study proceeds in the **Part B – The Earth-Life Cosmic Dance** to trace the emergence of life in the single-cell prokaryote, and its progression to multi-cellular eukaryotes, to soft-bodied life, to animals and plants, and to Homo Sapiens, interacting at each stage with and influenced by our maturing physical environment.

The study proceeds in the **Part C – Evolution of Man** to follow the emergence of the human, from early modern man to modern man, and finally to Man as the apex and turning point of evolution, to identify his role and destiny.

The study finally asks where evolution is heading, whether its terminal objective is in the temporal domain or may lie beyond materiality, which issue is further examined in the next volume, Cosmos*** III - Beyond Materiality.

COSMOS* III – Evolution Beyond Materiality?**

This volume reviews the evolutionary pathways of Man, inter alia whether there is a destiny Beyond Materiality.

The volume reviews (a) the religions of the major civilisations. (b) the philosophic thinking of our modern Western culture, and (c) our modern scientific and technological knowledge and achievements; and draws relevant conclusions from each about the metaphysical issues.

The volume finally discusses the two pathways emerging: (i) immortality Beyond Materiality and (ii) terrestrial mortality-immortality.

PRECIS

A comprehensive Pre-release of Cosmos** II.

Genealogy of this Book

After my second retirement, and sundry other research work, I decided to do a roundup of the frontiers of science, moving onward on a piece by piece basis, and inevitably focussing on evolution.

This undertaking has emerged to be a multi-part odyssey. Four of my earlier studies have led to this fifth volume. (see Genealogy).

By professional habit, I captured the outputs as I went along, and over the years released them as follows:

Volume	Title	Description
1	Quantum Mechanics, A Non-Technical Brief ISBN 978-981-14-9875-6 2020	Coinciding with the first quantum computers
2	Virus* The Biological Predator ISBN 978-981-18-3046-4 2021	Coinciding with and including a detailed coverage of Covid-19
3	Cosmos* The Physical Universe ISBN: 978-981-18-7401-7 2023	An historical survey of man's discovery of the universe. It summarises what we know today and looks to the future. Written in preparation for and timed with the launch of the James Webb Space Telescope (25 Dec 2021)
4A	Cosmos* II, (Precis of) Evolution – From Microbe to Man ISBN 978-981-94-5191-3 2026 (April)	Pre-release of Volume 4
4	Cosmos** II (The full work) Evolution - From Microbe to Man ISBN 978-981-94-5192-0 2026 (May)	Covering the Origin of Life, Role of Man - and the Way Forward
5 This work	Cosmos*** III Evolution - Beyond Materiality? ISBN 978-981-94-5007-7 2026 (November)	Covering the terminal objectives of evolution as seen at Turning Point Four, the Technological age.

I issued a Precis (Volume 4A) to capture the my overall findings fresh, and serve for easier digestion by others, as the main volumes together are substantial.

I have released all the earlier above as self-publications on the Internet at <https://geraldpillay.wordpress.com/>, and will do the same for those due. All my publications, including the above, are also available at <https://independent.academia.edu/GeraldPillay>

Dedication
to
Mabel, my darling wife,
thanking her for
her love, patience and support,
which helped
make this work happen.

Editorial Note 1

To the extent that the various search engines incorporate first-line AI, the exercise has benefitted from the latter. I have not otherwise used AI tools.

Figures tend to vary according to the sources and sometimes the author's imagination. I have not tried to reconcile them in most cases but used the most likely and most meaningful.

I am comfortable the output is a factual picture of our subject at the informed non-specialist level.

Editorial Note 2

For convenience,
I use the masculine to include the feminine, ie
"man" (and its derivatives) to include woman.

Again, for editorial convenience
and without disrespect,
I refer to the Supreme Being in the masculine
and omit use of the traditional capitalisation of "He".

Editorial Note 3

This a solo effort.
My apologies for persisting typos.

Turning Points

The study sees evolution as having taken place through five key Turning Points

Evolutionary Turning Points

Turning Point	Beginning From (CE)	Evolution
	50,000	Emergence
1	9,000	Cradles of Civilisations <i>Ancient Kingdoms, Empires</i>
2	15 th century	Modern Civilisation <i>Renaissance Scientific Revolution, Colonial Empires, Global occupation</i>
3	20 th Century	Global Society <i>United Nations Organisation Technical Revolution (Engineering) Digital Age (Electronics, Computerisation) Information Technology (IT and Digitisation)) Information Society (Internet & smartphones)</i>
4	21 Century	Technological Society <i>The Quantum Age (quantum computing. DNA computing) Artificial Intelligence (AI). Common World Monitoring & Management Systems. Common and Shared Information Systems. One World Society.</i>
5	21 Century (Late)	Technological Man <i>Totally dependent on technology and information systems. Improved technical and mental capacity to enquire. Better biological protection, and better health, body improvements and increasing longevity. Extensive robotisation, expanding further Man's physical capabilities. Universal scales of ethics and morality Improved human perfectibility</i>
Terminal Objective		Knowledge Society (and Civilisation) <i>Massively more knowledgeable, and ability to enquire into the still unknown, Quantum increase in scale of comprehension of what there is. Increasingly focused on Metaphysical issues. Able to perceive his destiny</i>
Fulfilment		When Man chooses and achieves his destiny.

To READERS

Use internal hyperlinks in TOC
to navigate to topics of interest,
and external (web) hyperlinks for more.
These links make the book a handy reference.

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Prologue

In **COSMOS **II – Evolution From Microbe to Man**, we came to the following conclusions:

- .(1) That the emergence of Man was a **quantum leap**, a jump or upscaling, for which there was no prior basis or preparation in the evolutionary process.
- .(2) The fundamental additional factor was that Man has been endowed with full **rationality**, ie. a set of intellectual faculties that enable him act as an **individual**, to reason, think in the abstract, speculate and conclude, coupled with the free will to choose his actions – or refrain from them.
- .(3) By creating Man as a free-acting individual, with intelligence to master the universe, evolution has made Homo Sapiens be the apex of physical evolution.
- .(4) Evolution has transferred responsibility for the future to Man. The hegemony over the Earth has passed on to him,
- .(5) The destiny of each Man is the terminal achievement of evolution. The destiny of the individuals collectively represents of the destiny of the final species, Homo Sapiens.

Evolution Continues

This is not to mean that physical evolution has stopped. The frontiers have simply broadened from the physical to the societal framework of civilisation. Man's intellectual faculties have become the main tool of advance.

The processes of physical evolution will still go on in all living creatures in response to environmental changes, including in Man. However, the major environmental changes and their time-frames will be Man-made hereon.

Evolutionary changes will be civilisational and centre on the individual not the species. It will be reflected in the increasing reach of the human mind, the improving moral character and performance of the individual and the upgraded quality (and longevity) of life, rather than in the bifurcation of species.

The modus operandi is no longer to progress by replacing the existing individual with a more evolved next one, but for each Man to progress as far as he may go - exercising his mind, his choice and his free will.

if Man goes extinct, evolution can start off again (say with the genus Pan) provided we have not destroyed everybody else as well, and go on to produce an even more improved version of us. However, we shall be into the last stage of the life cycle of the planet, and that may not take place. We could indeed be the terminal output of evolution.

Destiny of Man

From all that can be deduced, evolution today intends each individual to find his own destiny. It is an individual thing, not a species thing.

Because of free will, Man must necessarily evolve further in an environment permitting choice, with access to all options known. This is one of the critical parameters of societal development.

Henceforth, evolution will crystallise in the outcome of his decisions. The determining component has become his morals. It is recognised that Man is less than morally perfect. Man's is still evolving out of his animal instincts and as yet not always in full command of his passions and emotions. If "moral" means the good of his fellowmen and the species, he does not always take the best decisions, favouring self-interest and self-indulgence. As civilisation becomes more sophisticated, this factor becomes a dominant threat to evolution.

Today, Man lives his life on the mental plane, by his intelligence-centred activities. This means the sum of his thought-streams, knowledge, speculations, judgements, emotions and decisions which collectively identify the person that is he. It would not be untrue to say Man is a non-corporeal or incorporeal being in a corporeal body.

Subject to further enquiry, man's future could be wholly temporal, or lie beyond materiality. The latter may be by the evolution of multiple path options according to the choices of groups or the individual, rather than a one-street affair.

The notion of Man's life extending beyond materiality emerges from the incongruity of Man having a ridiculously short lifespan. Death may be necessary for physical renewal of cells, but there is no evolutionary role to terminate the mind.. For evolution to terminate the apex of the apex makes no sense.. On the contrary, the intelligence of Man is the very instrument necessary to move evolution beyond materiality.

To the extent he is still emergent, transitional and trapped in his body, and must die, it is valid to speculate that Man may have an after-life, which is another word for immortality.

The other reason is his growing personal accountability to manage human society safely as Homo Sapiens become a single community of billions with awesomely dangerous technology. To the extent that Man lags behind in behavioural perfectibility, he has to rely on enforcement of ethical and moral codes to keep collectively afloat. The growing levels of accountability has generated scales of punishment and rewards which need to be extended to an after-life to effect justice.

The religions generally offer both a moral framework with scales of reward and punishment, linked to immortality. Recent surveys show a majority of the human race adhere to a religion of some sort, and this is thought to have been a bulwark supporting civilisation.

Lastly, Man, has developed a range of metaphysical disciplines to probe our cosmos beyond materiality. These have inevitably focussed on the "Metaphysical issues". They are (1) is there a Supreme Bing who created the cosmos, including evolution and Man, and (2) if so, what was the purpose of Man. If the first answer is in the positive, the second become relevant to the destiny of Man. If the answer is a negative, then we must look to further refine our understanding of the destiny of our species, and our assumptions about the nature and character of Man. This is the Quest of the study.

[\(Back to TOC\)](#)

Chapter One

Destiny of Man

Nature of Man

Man's Investigative faculties

The intellectual of today accepts that Man's thinking faculties operate in two dimensions, the (i) the metaphysical and (ii) the empirical. Logic and reason are the common tools of both.

Philosophy is best understood as the "world view" and or "way of life" deriving from an understanding of the preceding two, after defining Man's destiny.

The empirical faculties need no comment. They deal with the **actual** physical universe. They are the basis of our science and technology, and underly our organisation and management of life.

Metaphysics is that set of intellectual disciplines using **abstract thought** to speculate, deduce and extract information and knowledge **about the real world**. Metaphysics investigates the fundamental nature of reality, existence, and being.

The facultative package incorporates a suite of emotional capabilities which provide subjective inputs to the thinking processes and enable the expression of man's non-physical responses. They encompass the aesthetic capabilities as well as the "virtues" such as trust, love and honour, but can be influenced by the imperfections of Man.

Terminal Objective

Man is the current highest terminal output of evolution. In the normal course, the species would simply be replaced by the next, and all current individuals would go extinct. In this case, however, it appears that **Homo Sapiens is itself the terminal objective of evolution**.

Our Nature

And the further difference is that, by granting each individual Man intelligence and free will (a mind), evolution has created the individual, and made **the destiny of the individual the ultimate purpose of evolution**.

With a mind, Man has transferred onto the mental plane, and added a **non-corporeal dimension** to his reality which is neither time or space bound.

As a result, Man's overall starting point is that his present life is too short, fraught with imperfections, illogicalities and limitations, and missing key elements, for a complete fulfilment of his destiny. There has got to be more, either totally within temporal time and materiality, or beyond materiality as well.

What is Destiny

Our destiny must include complete self-knowledge and full satisfaction of all want, in all dimensions, by proper self-management.

At the temporal plain, mastery of the Earth and the total well-being of self, society and the species would cover it. These are evolutionary, and we have no problem here.

At the mental level, however, we have a need to know the Purpose of Man and the terms of fulfilment of this life to achieve our destiny. This leads us to the Metaphysical issues. It boils down to whether there is a Supreme Being.

The Mental Plane

Evolution produced the **individual**. This was the essence of the human's turning point. Intelligence and freewill are the core constituents (sine qua non) of Man. We began to **function through our thoughts**.

The quantum leap transferred to man himself the **responsibility** for his own future evolution - and of his species. It placed within man's freewill the capability to decide whether to terminate evolution or determine its future shape.

Man has evolved as a collective society, on the principle of the **collective choice** of free individuals. We must act collectively. However, in extreme situations, the destiny of evolution can now rest in the will of an individual.

Man has taken over **mastery** of the physical environment. Man is himself the major threat, and must be responsible for the environment.

Man is a **moral** creature. We are painfully aware that Man is still **imperfect** behaviourally. Where "good" means the benefit of the species or another individual, he does often opt for self-interest or greed. Until he is perfect, the underlying need is a rewards and punishment to keep things in balance. The question is wide open whether perfectibility is on the evolutionary agenda. For that reason, we explore other pathways.

Man shares the feature of **mortality**, inherent in evolutionary succession. Whatever we have to do, we have a very short time to do it in. If man, the individual, is himself the terminal objective of evolution, it makes less sense for Homo Sapiens to be imperfect short-term beings. It encourages us to postulate forward evolution beyond materiality after death.

From the beginning, Man has had an **awareness of the unknown**. We speculate what exists beyond materiality, who created the cosmos, evolution and Man, and whether there was an after-life following death.

In examining the possible pathways for evolution of the individual, the following frontiers are of particular promise: (a) moral perfection (b) temporal longevity and (c) beyond materiality, ie immortality

Evolutionary Conundrum

It makes no sense for evolution to generate a sentient species of short-term beings with freewill to make collective decisions for its perpetuation, just to be exposed to the same behavioural uncertainty of the next batch of individuals, ad infinitum – bearing in mind we are billions in each generation. This supports the proposition that next quantum leap must be in terms of Man's individual future. Immortality is a valid proposition.

The shortness of the present life span is thought of as inconsistent with all he can and needs to do or achieve or enjoy. This impels man to extend his life, seek longevity and if possible conquer death, ie seek immortality.

Even if we achieved moral perfection and a global society living harmoniously in peace, intellectual man, the individual, may still ask the ultimate question: what's in it for me? What is the difference whether I do "good" or "bad". Do I simply pass on, another intermediate digit? Is the individual man then, who is endowed with a brilliance of mind to master the universe, unravel evolution, re-engineer the human genome, replicate nucleosynthesis, catalogue the contents of distant stars, and create new matter, to be snuffed out like a candle? A mind that can analyse and create all the above (and

more) will naturally ask how the cosmos came to be, is there a world beyond materiality and impermanence, and what is his relationship with it. In fact, what Man's Destiny.

The answers to the above presently lie outside physical discovery and proof. One possibility is that the human mind or its knowledge compass will evolve to the point when the answers will be transparent.

If it is proved that beyond materiality (immortality) does not exist, Man's satisfaction in life must lie in an existence positively lived and his works encapsulated in the collective inheritance of mankind. In this situation, he endures in historical memory (a form of non-corporeal longevity) until the last man and the species cease to exist. Evolution will have come to nothing. Earth itself will cease to exist about 4 billion years from now, and the universe sometime later.

The fact that he can postulate immortality suggests this is a valid pathway to examine, more so as the religious experience of Man contains much still to be digested.

The Temporal Conundrum

In the earlier volume we posited that by the time man moved out regularly into space, he might live to be say 500 years old - or more. He will probably reproduce by cloning, possibly becoming a "designer man" by frequent re-styling with a menu of preferred characteristics and fashions. He will be (genetically engineered to be) behaviourally more perfect, and the society's moral regulatory framework will undoubtedly become near un-circumventable. We could approach utopian conditions. I reproduce a quote made in the earlier *Precis* prerelease which might be echoed here:

"in the long-term (say 1,000 years from now), when every need, pleasure and wish had been satisfied, when he could hit a hole-in-one every time, and every cause was attended to, unless the metaphysical issues are cleared up, we shall still have a bunch of old fogies no wiser, and asking the same questions. Like the crows on the tree in Disney's *Jungle Book*, they would be sitting around and asking: 'what shall we do next?'

They will ask why do we exist, what is the point of being eternally good, is there a better form of longevity, something more or more worthwhile to do, a higher quality of life, what comes after temporal time, and what exactly is our ultimate destiny. Finally they will ask is this happiness?

They will still be looking for the next template for evolution, since this is no longer left to chance but is their responsibility. But then, they will also ask who they are responsible to, and if none why bother. They could become very bored.

Unless evolution (we) bio-engineers some kind of superman, a long life will not be so great if we were to be forever stuck in some artificial machine-body. To enjoy immortality, man will want to be fully incorporeal (free of his body) and transfer beyond materiality."

The concept of beyond materiality (immortality) complements, explains and fulfils many features in human life, to the point that a majority of people believe in it in different ways, mainly through religion.

Genesis of the God-idea The Metaphysical Issues

The most obvious observation about our world is that, while the cosmos and everything in it is complete unto itself down to its purpose, Man seems to be an incomplete job, with loose ends, an inadequately short-span, and behaviourally imperfect, with a most powerful intellect yet unable to figure out his destiny.

Because life is short and Man is so incredibly mental (non-corporeal) a creature, the first question to ask is: is there an after-life or life after death, toward which human evolution is heading?

The answer in turn lies behind two further questions: how did the cosmos originate? And is there a Supreme Being, who created the world and triggered the evolution of Man, and with what purpose?

I have decided to call these questions the "Metaphysical issues". The major objective of the study is to find out how much we know about answer, so as to perceive our evolutionary destiny. For a better focus, I state them as follows:

The Metaphysical Issues

When all is said and done, a person must circle round, boil down, and clear first what I call the “Metaphysical Issues”. These comprise three separate propositions

- . – (A) Is there a **Prime Mover or Supreme Being**?
- . – (B) How did the universe (and Man) come into existence?
- . – (C) What is the **Purpose (or mission) of Man, what are his obligations, and what is his destiny?**

If the first is proved or accepted or believed in, it admits for consideration that he was the author of the second, from which it follows he prescribed the third. This I call this whole set the “**God-option**”.

If the first is not proved or believed to exist, the second and third remain as “**non-theistic**” **Metaphysical Issues** deserving attention in their own right.

The Metaphysical Options

God-option

The God-option, also known the “ traditional” option, derives from mankind’s intuitive and historical understandings and beliefs, which have served as his intellectual and emotional fulcrum and given coherence to societal development from his first emergence. It is a total package. This option is the basis of the religions, and is the belief of their adherents. It might be noted that traditional metaphysics has empty sets for the other components, if the God component is negative.

Non-theistic options

In modern society, there are increasing numbers who are non-religious. A significant proportion reject the notion of God or higher being altogether, called “atheists”. Others believe in a God but not his involvement in Man and his destiny, who call themselves “deists” or “theists”. And there are “agnostics” with no beliefs. There is a continuing search among these categories in the scientific and philosophic domains (with increasing cross-overs into metaphysical thought) for “non-theistic” answers to the other components of the Metaphysical issues, Thus, sometimes, we come across the term “non-theistic metaphysics”.

Two Evolutionary Paths

Depending on the answers, Man would appear to have two evolutionary pathways: (1).an immortal destiny - Beyond Materiality, and or (2) a terrestrial destiny.

The purpose of this study is to review our history, cultural heritages and intellectual domains to see what we know.

The God-idea first emerged in Man’s early intuitive awareness of the unknown. This took different forms and metaphysical shapes through the major religions, inter alia the Chinese, the Darnatic and the Abrahamic religions.

Monotheism first emerged in the Judaic religion¹. According to their records, amidst rampant polytheism, a fiery and somewhat irate Prime Mover one day put it across to them in no uncertain

¹ The monotheist god **Ahura Mazda** became known possibly a little earlier in the Mithridatic religion of the Medes, but the historical record is weak, and the religion is extinct today.

terms on a mountain top: "I Am the Lord thy God. Thou shalt have no false gods before me." And he laid down some clear commandments exactly how to behave. The Jewish records have this as happening around one year after their Exodus in 1313 BCE, but others think the latter could have been later in around 1446 BCE.

On the other hand, the rationalised metaphysical idea of a Supreme Being arose in contemporary modern civilisation emerged from the Western cultural stream. When I tried to find how God-idea began, I found myself looking for the point before science was born and before modern institutionalised religion was established. And I found myself among the Greeks. They had just hived off the Greek pantheon of gods into legend, discovered democracy in small city-states, and they decided to "cultivate their minds" and **think** how to build their world. They went on to lay the foundations of modern civilisation.

Father of Metaphysics

Aristotle (384-322 BCE) stands out as the father of metaphysics, science and their common tool, logic.. He taught that thinking is the mind's special power to understand the true nature of things by using the senses, the imagination - and the intellect (mind). He opens his most famous book, "Metaphysics" with, "All men by nature desire to know".

He identified two types of thinking (i) the Theoretical intellect - this part thinks about pure truth, facts, and how the universe works; and (ii) the Practical intellect. Theoretical wisdom elevates the mind through the pure joy of understanding the universe. Perhaps his most famous remark was: "It is the mark of an educated mind to be able to entertain a thought without accepting it."

In his Metaphysics, Aristotle explores the fundamental nature of reality, existence, and the first principles of things, a study he calls "first philosophy" or the science of "being qua being" (being as such). The wise person knows (or looks for) the "why" and the universal causes behind things. It is the most commanding form of knowledge, existing for its own sake rather than for utility or production.

In his Physics, Aristotle believed that to truly know something, you must understand its four "causes" or explanations: 1) Material cause: what something is made of; (2) Formal cause: the pattern or essence of the thing; (3) Efficient cause: what brought it into being (the maker or mover; and (4) Final cause: the purpose or goal of the thing (its function or "that for the sake of which").

Unmoved Mover

Aristotle concludes that there must be an Unmoved Mover, who is also the Prime Mover when in the role of first cause of all motion in the universe. It is eternal, unchanging, and non-physical. Aristotle equates this ultimate philosophical necessity with **God**, describing it as the most good substance. It is entirely impersonal and takes no providential role in human affairs.

The Prime Mover consists entirely of actuality with zero potentiality. Because change is the movement from potential to actual, a being with no potential cannot change or be moved by anything else. It possesses no physical matter, as matter is the subject of potentiality and physical change. Being immaterial, it does not act through physical or mechanical contact. It moves the universe not as a mechanical push or pull, but as an object of desire or love, and thought.

The Metaphysics contain additional insights about the Unmoved Mover. Because its activity must be perfect and unchanging, its sole function is pure, eternal contemplation. It contemplates the only object worthy of its perfection—itself. It is defined as "thinking about thinking" and is entirely unaware of or indifferent to the physical world. Aristotle establishes through a chain of causes that physical motion must ultimately trace back to an initial Unmoved source.

It will be seen at once that this is in fact a highly refined intellectual definition of the Supreme Being or God. It is no wonder that many major philosophers of all three Abrahamic religions came in time to adopt, adapt or be inspired by Aristotle's formulations to build and rationalise their own teachings about God.

Thomas of Aquinas in particular, in his *Summa Theologica*, comprehensively blended Aristotle's ideas within Christian understandings, constructing a monumental basis for faith with reason. In particular he adopted the principle that all things in nature have an intrinsic purpose or final end. He also merged Aristotelian eudaimonism (human flourishing through virtue) with Christian theology, making the ultimate human end union with God.

Leading Edges of Civilisation

It is my thesis that the civilisation of man is the next stage of evolution. By "civilisation" I mean Man's capacity to invent, organise, lead and act in the best interests of the common good and the species, while providing the individual the best possible life fulfilment. With civilisation, Man determines its next steps of evolution, by finding and attaining his destiny, the latter on an individual basis.

I find it convenient to think that man's civilisational advancements can be viewed in tin these leading edges: (a) facultative, (b) societal, and (c) technological development (d) metaphysical, (e) religious and (f) moral.

Facultative Development

The mind took shape when we acquired the ability to extract and integrate external and internal data, then sort, store and recall the information, and with these **reason** about things.

This was the beginning of science. Man further acquired the capacity to speculate in the abstract, including what is life about. This was the beginning of metaphysics. Together, these "intellectual faculties" provide the basis for taking decisions, exercising choice and Man's functioning as a factor in a freewill environment.

Intellectual Issues

Man has had no issues intellectually at the physical level. He will continue to unravel the cosmos on all frontiers.

At the metaphysical level, Man has been able to deduce that the cosmos may exist and extend beyond our knowledge of reality, beyond materiality, but not prove anything as this lies beyond his biological limits.

This pursues the question of existence, reality and being, including who started the whole business and why. Different civilisation streams have emerged with different concepts, from a Supreme Being or God to none. Other issues the intellect pose include the purpose of Man.

Societal Development

Man has evolved as both an individual and a member of his society. The latter started as bands and groups, and proceeded to become communities, societies, kingdoms, states and nations, most recognisably as countries. In later stages, they formed empires, federations and alliances. Today, humans exist in all these forms and have established common "united nations" infrastructure, the foundation of a global society, for better management of the world. We refer to all the above within a country as its societal development,

For our purposes, we may point to the following "sinews of society" as key components of our societal infrastructure:

- .(a) The legal system, including the moral framework.
- .(b) The governmental framework, democracy, authoritarianism, internationalisation,
- .(c) The intellectia, ideology, the sciences, and social sophistication
- .(d) The economic system, wealth and well-being
- .(e) The religious and cultural institutions, beliefs and moral development..

Societal Issues

The primary objective of societal development is how to integrate humanity into a single working society, with common principles, shared resources and equitable wellbeing. The primary problem is that Man is still behaviourally imperfect.

The central feature is how strict or flexible the regulatory provisions are. If the ideology includes free will, they must allow for “reasonable” exercise of choice. In a communist world, the politburo is thought to be the best people to decide.

In the early days, society tended to be structured on religious or ideological lines. Today, a country is judged by whether or not it has been able to incorporate the provisions and practices of the Bill of Human Rights of the United Nations Charter. The latter includes various freedoms.

Technological Development

Technology is the application of common sense followed by the sciences, for the survival, well-being and advancement of Man. Every stage of human evolution has had its particular level of technology. Thus, we have had the stone tool, fire, the wheel, the bronze axe, the written word, the steel blade, gun-powder, ships, steam power, the combustion engine, electricity, aeroplanes, and jets.

Today, we are a one global people. We are a digitised networked civilisation. We are an information-based society with access to (substantially) all information in common, and can communicate with each other anywhere and anytime. We live on the mental plane.

The accumulated knowledge and wisdom of Man is stored in its common data banks. We are the inheritors of mountains of software, enabling us to build bigger and more advanced programmes. Man’s intellectual capacities are being multiplied zillionfold by the stabilisation and standardisation of the quantum computer and artificial intelligence (AI) systems. We shall soon become a “Technological Man” in a Knowledge Society.

At this point, we cannot yet say how our biological modifications of the human, including longevity, will extend our intellection or eliminate our behavioural imperfections. As of now, we have to assume the status quo.

To the extent Man is disengaging from the God-options offered by the religions, he will fall back on technology to probe the boundaries of the sciences in search of “non-theistic” metaphysical answers

Technological Issues

If he can maintain himself and the planet in safety there is no doubt he will achieve all that is technologically possible (including longevity), except conquer death. The ultimate product of evolution could in fact be a “Technological Man” in temporal immortality.

But there are still large areas that need to be sorted out. We cannot yet securely defend ourselves against viruses or avert senescence. Man remains mortal,

He has also acquired enormous control over destructive power. He can end evolution if he mismanages it.

The Metaphysical Front

On the metaphysical front, Man has run up against a wall: he cannot empirically or metaphysically know what is beyond the material world, which by definition is the unknown and exists beyond materiality.

His furthest point of metaphysical perception is that it is reasonable for him to speculate and infer that there could and should be a Prime Mover or Superior Being who created the cosmos and Man, and to whom the latter is accountable. This has been the basis used by the religions. Traditional Metaphysics has only one option, the God-option. Its “no-God option” is an empty set.

Metaphysical Issues

It is inevitable Man should question these issues. Without the answers, he cannot establish the meaning of life, and a philology of life

Man would be happiest to find that there is meaning in life. I am not so sure he would equally elated to find it conclusively proved that there is **no meaning to life**. One needs to take a deep breathe to conclude that the cosmos self-created out of nothing, for no purpose, with no tomorrow, and that it matters to nobody what Man knows, does or fails to do, including why he should keep the species on going.

From the point of view of this study, life after death it is an option to be explored. If it is available it represents our next or a future evolutionary path, at which point we might even learn whether this path is for all or to be chosen by only some individuals or a branch of our species.

So the search is on. Those reacting against the God-option are looking for “non-theistic” answers about the Purpose of Man.

Religious Domain

The initial stirrings about the metaphysical emerged from the clouds of unknowing surrounding early man. Responding to an innate need for some answers, man proceeded to believe in and ascribe the unexplainable variously to higher beings (spirits and deities) and began to worship them. This was the start of religion.

As science cleared up much of the unknown, the metaphysical issues remained. The major religions themselves proceeded to develop considerable corpus(es) of metaphysical understandings.

Today, religion is based on the acceptance of and belief in a Supreme Being, or other higher order of being(s), each religion has gone on to develop its own understandings of the meaning and way of life, and offers a system of belief and practice to Man including worship

Religion has been institutionalised in every major civilisation, and underpins their societal development and culture. Today, taken collectively, it is possibly the biggest social-cultural collective, having established freedom of worship as a fundamental human right.

They constitute the behavioural bulwarks of the modern world. Much of our highest social Ideals have come from religious sources, eg. liberty, equality, morality, justice, even charity and love.

Religion is strongly positioned in the human psyche, “More people believe that there is a God. While 62% self-identify as religious, 72% say that there is a God. Just under one in seven (16%) however do not believe that any God exists. 10% are not sure. The number of atheists is a remarkably low 10%.”²

The human intellectual package incorporates arcane capabilities such as imagination, mysticism, visions and dreams. Further, some have (or can induces themselves to have) paranormal and suprasensory perceptions. Generally, they enhance spiritual awareness. Generally these experiences come through to us through their religious associations.

As long as we remain imperfect, religion offers moral guidance, which is remarkably uniform across the board, including worship and self-purification. A cynic said, if everyone practised their religion, the world would be safe. On the other hand, an optimist said that with the creation of several religions, man’s task of finding God is made easier in the end.

² - Gallup International, Survey 2022, News 4 Dec 22, <https://www.gallup-international.com/survey-results-and-news/survey-result/more-prone-to-believe-in-god-than-identify-as-religious-more-likely-to-believe-in-heaven-than-in-hell>

Religious Issues

In fulfilment of their purpose, the major religions do variously address three issues (a) the purpose, role, duties and responsibilities of Man (b) the perfectibility of the human, and, in the meantime, (c) the need for a moral code to regulate human conduct and against which human performance can be judged.

With universal education and sharing, the religions can refine and share their inputs on all of the preceding with those scientists and philosophers searching for answers in the “non-theistic” metaphysical domains. There are increasing signs of convergence between science, philosophy and religion.

Moral Development

Behavioural scientists (psychologists and the lot) as a whole take the position that man is both selfish and caring. Moral infrastructure and development are therefore necessary features of civilisation. Their total absence is not compatible with the design of evolution.

Moral behaviour is that which contributes to (1) the further evolution of the species and (2) the maximum well-being and happiness of the human community. Difficulties because Man has free will and can act to the contrary in any one situation. The best we can hope is that man does conform to the necessary moral behaviour collectively.

Morality is said to be that set of built-in instinctive and emotional controls, expressed as his cultural development and managed by his reason, which keeps the man and the species tilted towards the desirable direction of evolution. This supports my view that his moral development is at this stage the **leading edge** of our future.

Moral Issues

One dimension of morality is its possible relation with a Supreme Being as the designer and creator of the universe, evolution and man. In the God-option, everything is explicit: be good and be rewarded, or else...and Man is accountable. Secular metaphysicians must look for other benchmarks and other behavioural management formulae.

Tuning Points

The emergence of Homo Sapiens was more than a quantum leap. It was a **turning point**. With Homo Sapiens, evolution introduced intelligence and freewill, and we attained full intellectual functionality as Man. The study sees civilisation as ALEADY having taken place through four key Turning Points and now evolving in the fifth and. heading for sixth – the culmination.

Evolutionary Turning Points

Turning Point	Beginning From (CE)	Evolution
	50,000	Emergence
1	9,000	Cradles of Civilisation <i>Ancient Kingdoms, Empires</i>
2	15 th century	Modern Civilisation <i>Renaissance</i> <i>Scientific Revolution,</i> <i>Colonial Empires,</i> <i>Global occupation</i>

3	20 th Century	Global Society <i>United Nations Organisation</i> <i>Technical Revolution (Engineering)</i> <i>Digital Age (Electronics, Computerisation)</i> <i>Information Technology (IT and Digitisation))</i> <i>Information Society (Internet & smartphones)</i>
4	21 Century	Technological Society <i>The Quantum Age (quantum computing. DNA computing)</i> <i>Artificial Intelligence (AI).</i> <i>Common World Monitoring & Management Systems.</i> <i>Common and Shared Information Systems.</i> <i>One World Society.</i>
5	21 Century (Late)	Technological Man <i>Totally dependent on technology and information systems.</i> <i>Improved technical and mental capacity to enquire.</i> <i>Better biological protection, and better health, body improvements and increasing longevity.</i> <i>Extensive robotisation, expanding further Man's physical capabilities.</i> <i>Universal scales of ethics and morality</i> <i>Improved human perfectibility</i>
Terminal Objective		A Knowledge Society (Civilisation) <i>Massively more knowledgeable, and ability to enquire into the still unknown,</i> <i>Quantum increase in scale of comprehension of what there is.</i> <i>Increasingly focused on Metaphysical issues.</i> <i>Able to perceive his destiny</i>
Fulfilment		When Man chooses and achieves his destiny.

Plan of Study

The overall objective is to establish Man's destiny, ie. his evolutionary pathways. The study pursues these by addressing the Metaphysical issues, as follows:.

- . – First, we examine the **God-option**, which is mainly offered by the religions .
- . - And then we look at the “**Non-theistic**” **thought** streams coming mainly from the modern scientific and philosophic communities.
- . - And then we look for **New Generation convergent thought** which may come from any contemporary source, including the religious
- . - And finally, we draw some **Conclusions**.

I have chosen to review my subjects using their historical narrative, to connect up their developments as a meaningful whole.

Cradles of Civilisation

For study of the first item, I have chosen Mesopotamia, India and China as they represent **cradles of civilisation** with rich religious development **still extant**. I have given them the full historical treatment. I apologise for the length. History is an indulgence of mine. In these cases, we can see the the God-option through religion and philosophy over 4,000 years of societal development. (Readers can skip here and there.)

Mesopotamia connects through to modern times, forming a common basis for the Judaeo-Christian, Islamic and associated religions and through the Greeks to contemporary philosophy. The Abrahamic Religions come under Mesopotamia, For convenience, I have tucked in the Persians and the Mithridatic Religion as well.

The links between present-day India and the Indus Valley civilisation (discovered in 1921) are being increasingly established, giving the whole a cradle of civilisation status. I therefore give India and the Dharmic religions their full historical treatment.

If for nothing else, India deserves full attention because modern day Hinduism and the modern day democratic system are uniquely married in a religious-secular society, one of the two viable options for development for the still massive human populations in the under-developed world.

Like India, China is included because it carries one of the two longest cradle of civilisation heritages into modern times, including their rich religious, sociological and philosophical heritages.

China continues into the modern era, with a second part incorporating a modern Communist revolutionary history and ideology of its own. Quite apart from discovering the Unknown, the separation of state and religion (or ideology) and the choice between democracy and totalitarianism are key issues in the further evolution of human civilisation. China today offers the alternative of an atheistic non-religious authoritarian pathway to Man.

I have presented each civilisation in separate chapters for their history and their religious heritage, the one following the other. The exception is China, where I have divided the whole history into two parts, covering their traditional cultural history-development and Communist China independently, but in one chapter.

Modern (Western) Civilisation

Modern contemporary civilisation took shape out of the Western cultural stream, which in turn emerged out of Graeco-Roman civilisation, riding on Christianity as the foundational religion. Following the Renaissance, it took over as the leading civilisation, catapulting evolution through the scientific and technological revolutions to our becoming today a Global Society. We knitted together by IT as One World, sharing information, knowledge and beliefs, as well as our speculations about our common destiny.

We are crossing not only the borders between our disciplines but across cultures. Much of our intellectual and research is today is shared internationally, and institutionalised, and the fruits available for all mankind. The standards of proof in modern society are very high, The grounds. For pure belief must be equally tenable.

Part of our evolutionary achievement is establishing an open democratic society, with people able to practice freedom of choice, thought, belief and religion – or have none.

It is the above environment that gives rise to “non-theistic” thought streams in our destiny search. The work going on is extensive. This Study reviews the difficult scenario as follows. (a) Scientific domain, (b) the Philosophic domain, and (c) New Generation thinking.

On the basis of the above, I have divided the Study as follows,:

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Chapter	Cultural Heritage	Remarks
	Destiny of Man	Overview
	Review of Religious domain	<p>Mesopotamian Civilisation:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> -Mithridatic-Zoroastrian religion -Abrahamic Religions -Babist-Bahai religion <p>Indian Cultural Heritage (history):</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> -Hinduism -Jainism -Buddhism -Sikhism <p>Chinese Cultural Heritage (history):</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> -Taoism -Confucianism -Communism
	Review of Philosophic domain	Western Cultural tradition (with historical background): Philosophies (From Greek to 21st Century)
	Review of Scientific domain	<p>In to Brave new World</p> <p>Scientific revolution</p> <p>Information revolution</p> <p>Technological revolution</p> <p>Quantum revolution</p>
	Outcome of Religious Review	<p>Early Monotheistic religions</p> <p>Transcendental- Monotheistic religions</p> <p>Revealed religions</p>
	Outcome of Scientific Review	
	Outcome of Philosophic Review	
	Evolutionary Pathways	
	Conclusions	

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Chapter Two

Beginnings

Prehistory

Our Ancestors

The earliest proto-humans (hominids) began about 7 millions years ago. The Palaeolithic (also known as the Stone Age) began about 2.9 millions ago and ended 12,000 ago, merging into a transition Mesolithic age.

The latter in turn merged into the Neolithic (New Stone Age) which began around 10,000 years ago down to 3,500 years ago. The Chalcolithic period, or Copper age, began about 5,700 to 5,500 year ago, quickly followed by the Bronze age from 5,500 to 3,250 years ago

The Homo Sapiens species evolved from the Homo habilis, There were 15-20 species of hominids, before Homo Sapiens began, around 50,000 years ago, in the Upper Palaeolithic . Some 99% of human evolution took place in the Palaeolithic.

From the earliest emergence of the proto-humans or hominids (the primates) members began to acquire desirable group-cohesive behaviour. These became strengthened by their pre-rational cognitive and emotional faculties, as the groups enlarged and evolved socially.

In the 1990s, Robin Dunbar ³produced a study that group control was related to the brain size of the species (specifically the neocortical index). The larger the brain, the great the relationship span. Thus, chimpanzees, who branched off over five million years ago, tend to level off in bands at around 30-50 members. On the other hand, single humans today are thought to be naturally comfortable in a milieu of 150. Following from the preceding, social historians generally recognise the development of the human community as follow.

Table 2.1
Evolution of Humans

Period ya (years ago)	Society type	Number of Individuals
6,000,000	Bands	10s
100,000-10,000	Bands	10-100s
10,000-5,000	Tribes	199-1000s
5,000-4000	Chiefdoms	1,000-10,000s
4,000-3,000	States	10-100,000
3,000-present	Empires	100,000-1,000,000

³ https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Dunbar%27s_number

Hunters and Gatherers.

Paleolithic Age (Old Stone Age)

The early proto-humans (hominids) used stone tools and lived in small nomadic groups. They were primarily hunter-gatherers, from about 1.9 million years ago to the emergence of behavioural modernity (Homo Sapiens) roughly by 50,000 years ago.. At that point, until 12,000 years ago, the end of the Upper Palaeolithic, we were all hunter-gatherers

The great “out of Africa” exodus of hominids had begun earlier by 250,000 years ago. By 45,000 years ago, humans lived in northern Europe. By 40,000 years ago, the first humans set foot in Australia. By 30,000 years ago, Japan was reached, and by 27,000 years ago humans were present in Siberia above the Arctic Circle. By the end of the Upper Palaeolithic humans had crossed the Bering Strait and expanded throughout the Americas.

With emergence of Homo Sapiens, there occurred a marked increase in the diversity of artifacts. bone artifacts and the first art appeared in the archaeological record. The first evidence of human fishing also noted

In time, tools, such as stone-bladed tools, tools made of antlers, and tools made of bone were created during this period. People began creating clothing. What appeared to be sewing needles were found around 40,000 years ago and dyed flax fibres dated 36,000 year ago have been found. Human beings may have begun wearing clothing as far back as 190,000 years ago.

Cultural aspects emerged, which included cave paintings, sculpture, carvings, and engravings on bone and ivory. Towards the end of the Palaeolithic, humans began to produce the earliest works of art and to engage in religious or spiritual behaviour, such as burial and ritual.

Societal Development

Our earliest Homo Sapiens stayed close together for better hunting and protection of the group, basically their own enlarging extended family. Everyone had to hunt – or gather - and look after one another. Any youngster who did not toe the line was simply given the stick and a laggard had his rations cut. A truly reprehensible fellow would simply have his back stripped off and be hung out to dry and feed the birds. There was freewill, but everybody wanted in. Everyone knew the terms of belonging and the rules of the group. These constituted their ethics, their moral code and their personal code of conduct, all in one, the bedrock and first layer of their culture – or civilisation if you like.

Facultative Development

Our early ancestors communicated, but did not write. Understanding of the physical world was limited. Such people soon ascribed unexplainable phenomena to spiritual beings more powerful than themselves who were responsible for good and bad happenings, perhaps a deity or two. This soon led to propitiating the spirit world for protection and favours, individually and collectively. In time animism became the next layer of their culture. Considering their global perambulations, their incredible length of evolution over time, and their successful spread, they must have developed this faculty very early in their evolution and got most things right - if not also a lot of animistic help.

The individual at this stage had probably not yet developed a sense of self-assessment of his actions, a personal moral code; Not unlikely the leader one day, without thinking, yelled at a lazy member, “How do you expect your (god) to grant you (us) favours if you do not do your work properly. Go, sacrifice a coconut under the holy tree, and come straight back and finish your work. And let me look at your nails. They are filthy. Don’t you know it’s bad luck. Cut them.” And that could have planted some early strands of religious ritual into the group’s culture,

There is a natural progression in the development of early religion. Among the first to appear would have been the shaman, the individual who could induce himself into a trance and make contact with

the spirit world. In Malacca Chinese culture, they are called “lotang”. The transition from such a dramatic spirit world to belief in spirits, an after-life, reward and punishment is straightforward.

Needly to say as religion became institutionalised, these elements were reinforced by, ceremonials, religious clerics and religious education, while the simple folk continued to believe in their “hantus” and “pontianaks” (Malay spirits). In the Hindu world, the “karvadi carrier” and the “fire walker” are forms of penance, but in their extreme ecstasies they are difficult to tell apart from shamanism.

By the time they reached the Americas, their descendants, the Amerindians (Red Indians), were riding horses, lived in groups of 100s and were planting corn. The many groups had their own religious beliefs, among which was the Manitou the many spirits who inhabited the earth and protected them. The people of the north believed that, after death, they would enter the spirit world of their “ancestors hunting grounds” where there would be plenty of water, animals and food.

Religion among Hunters and Gatherers

It was my good fortune to find the research study “Hunter-Gatherers and the Origins of Religion” by Hervey C. Peoples, Pavel Duda and Frank W. Marlowe, published on 6 May 2016 at the National Library of Medicine (NIH)’s PubMed Central (PMC) library⁴. I found this an impressively prepared survey. It covered 33 indigenous hunter-gatherer communities phylogenetically selected against 7 critical religious beliefs and practices.

Table 2.2
Origins of Religion among Hunters and Gatherers

Religious character	%
Animism	100
Belief in an Afterlife	79
Shamanism	79
Ancestor worship (total)	45
High Gods (total)	39
Active Ancestor Worship	24
Active High Gods	15
Number of societies with character=33	

I quote extracts of the study, as they are self-explanatory:

From the Abstract

“Recent studies of the evolution of religion have revealed the cognitive underpinnings of belief in supernatural agents, the role of ritual in promoting cooperation, and the contribution of morally punishing high gods to the growth and stabilization of human society.

4 - <https://pmc.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/articles/PMC4958132/>

The universality of religion across human society points to a deep evolutionary past. However, specific traits of nascent religiosity, and the sequence in which they emerged, have remained unknown.

Here we reconstruct the evolution of religious beliefs and behaviors in early modern humans using a global sample of hunter-gatherers and seven traits describing hunter-gatherer religiosity: animism, belief in an afterlife, shamanism, ancestor worship, high gods, and worship of ancestors or high gods who are active in human affairs.

We reconstruct ancestral character states using a time-calibrated supertree based on published phylogenetic trees and linguistic classification and then test for correlated evolution between the characters and for the direction of cultural change.

Results indicate that the oldest trait of religion, present in the most recent common ancestor of present-day hunter-gatherers, was animism, in agreement with long-standing beliefs about the fundamental role of this trait.

Belief in an afterlife emerged, followed by shamanism and ancestor worship. Ancestor spirits or high gods who are active in human affairs were absent in early humans, suggesting a deep history for the egalitarian nature of hunter-gatherer societies. There is a significant positive relationship between most characters investigated, but the trait "high gods" stands apart, suggesting that belief in a single creator deity can emerge in a society regardless of other aspects of its religion."

From the Conclusions.

"Our results indicate that the oldest trait of religion, shared by the most recent common ancestor of present-day hunter-gatherers, was animism. This supports long-standing beliefs about the antiquity and fundamental role of this component of human mentality, which enables people to attribute intent and lifelike qualities to inanimate objects and would have prompted belief in beings or forces in an unseen realm of spirits. Reconstructions are equivocal on whether or not the religion of the last common ancestor (LCA) of present-day hunter-gatherers included belief in an afterlife, shamanism, ancestor worship, and the concept of a single creator deity, or a high god. Belief in either ancestral spirits or creator deities who remain active in human affairs was not present in ancestral hunter-gatherer societies, according to the reconstructions.

The majority of traits of religion we investigated exhibit a correlated pattern of character change on phylogeny. The results suggest that belief in an afterlife, shamanism, and ancestor worship evolve in concerted fashion as an integrated system of beliefs and practices.

However, neither high gods nor active high gods exhibit correlated evolution with the rest of the religious traits, including ancestor worship

This is in line with a variety of evidence from other studies suggesting that if a society acquires belief in an omniscient and potentially morally punishing creator deity, it does so regardless of other aspects of its religion but more as a reflection of its social and political structure."

Individual Moral Code

It is clear that in the early homogenous societies, the moral code of the community was also the code of ethics, and also the personal code of the individual. These formed the conditions of membership. There was only one dimension of political freewill, stay with the group or leave.

For the individual, it sufficed that he complied with his social duties, and fulfilled his or the collective's observances vis-a-vis their deities. There was as yet no talk of the afterlife, right or wrong, personal moral accountability, or reward or punishment.

Mesolithic Age

Nomadic Farmers and Settlements

By the Mesolithic (12,000 to 10,000 years ago), our humans would arrived at their ultimate continental destinations. Everyone was in place.

The thrust at this point was the growth of the Homo Sapiens' brain to reach full intelligence. The very long period living as hunters-gatherers from 50,000 years ago – following the even longer period evolving as hominids before that – must be seen as the required gestation for the brain of the Homo Sapiens to attain full intellectual functionality. It took our ancestors 38 millennia to reach the first stage at the end of the Palaeolithic. It would take another two millennia in the Mesolithic to cross over to the Neolithic. Then, It took the brain a further step, brought the evolving changes to maturity, and prepared man for Neolithic life.

The Mesolithic people continued to survive through hunting and gathering, but there occurred a change in the pattern of hunting from hunting in groups of large herd animals in the Palaeolithic to smaller animals that could be taken out with bows and arrows.

The Mesolithic culture was more semi-nomadic than nomadic. They often had semi-permanent settlements near water sources and did not move until it was the peak time for gathering resources in another area.

In the Stone Age, flint was shaped and used as tools and weapons, The most important discovery of the Mesolithic age was the microlith. It was a small pointed stone used for arrowheads, knives and spears. It represented a technological advancement from the crude tools of the Palaeolithic.

Two other changes took place: large scale domestication of plants and animals, and an increase in materialistic culture. The development of agriculture contributed to the rise of permanent settlements and personal well-being.

Facultative Development

People of the Mesolithic-Neolithic age continued to be primarily animists. They believed that all the elements of the natural world, like animals, forests, mountains, rivers, and stones, had self-consciousness.

Burial rituals, including burial of goods such as red deer skull masks and headdresses, indicated the beginnings of religious practices rooted in shamanism. The Mesolithic saw a significant rise in the use of cemeteries.

The Mesolithic communities remained solidly mono cultural and at the upper semi-nomadic levels of the Dunbar numbers. Like their predecessors, their group rules of conduct were their ethics and their moral code. It can be expected that their moral regulatory framework would have enlarged to cope with their enlarging socio-economic development.

(Optional reading but interesting)

Göbekli Tepe

The most remarkable human-created feature of the Mesolithic period is Göbekli Tepe, Discovered in the 1990s in present-day Turkey, it is a massive megalith around 11,000 years old – the oldest known significant site created by humans. The Stone Age masons created 20 circles of tall rock pillars weighing up to 20 tons The site predates the invention of writing, metallurgy, and even pottery. It predates Stonehenge by 5,000 years.

Evidence indicates the inhabitants of Göbekli Tepe were hunter-gatherers, who supplemented their diet with early forms of domesticated cereal and lived in villages for at least part of the year.

Current excavators interpret Göbekli Tepe as a settlement, based on recent findings such as domestic structures and features, water-supply installations, and Neolithic domestic tools. The site's

original excavator had described it as a sanctuary used by groups of nomadic hunters-gatherers from a wide area, with few or no permanent inhabitants

The earliest signs leading to sedentary culture can be seen in the Levant to as early as 12,000 BC, when the Natufian culture became sedentary. It evolved into an agricultural society by 10,000 BC.

Farmers and Settlements

Neolithic - New Stone Age

The Neolithic period, or New Stone Age (12,000 to 4,000 years ago) was characterised by a wide-ranging revolution that arose independently in several parts of the world. It was the beginning of a settled human lifestyle. People learned to cultivate plants and domesticate animals for food, rather than rely solely on hunting and gathering.

The Neolithic was characterised by stone tools shaped by polishing or grinding, and the appearance of pottery and weaving. In time, bronze became the primary material for tools and weapons, and a good part of the stone technology became obsolete

It started in Mesopotamia around 12,000 years ago and was succeeded there by the Chalcolite or Copper age around 6,500 years ago. In Ancient Egypt the Neolithic lasted up to 5,150 years ago and in China up to 4,000 years ago.

The time frames varied world-wide, but the changes were similar. The Neolithic revolution was the critical transition taking Homo Sapiens from scattered groups of hunter-gatherers to farming villages and from there to more technologically sophisticated societies.

The invention of agriculture was the central development. Agriculture refers to a series of discoveries involving the domestication, culture, and management of plants and animals. It was one of the most far reaching discoveries of early humans leading to profound social changes. The earliest known farming settlement was Jarmo, about 7,600 BC to 10,000 years ago, in Mesopotamia.

Facultative Development

People of the Neolithic age, like their predecessors, were animists. They believed that all the elements of the natural world, like animals, forests, mountains, rivers, and stones, had self-consciousness.

The ritual calendar of Neolithic life began to revolve around the harvest; the people of the age worshipped grain-oriented deities, prayed and sacrificed for good harvests, and threw celebrations in the harvest season.

The codes of conduct were still the those of the collective. There could have been the beginnings of personal moral code at home.

Societal Development

Starting with burn, clear, plant and move on; early man moved progressively on to mixed small holdings. The societal arrangements would probably include shared nurseries and buffalo-ploughing hours, common livestock-arrangements, storage and irrigation, and "gotong royong" (gang labour - essentially on a self-sufficiency basis). The full social sophistications of an agricultural society would follow in the next age.

Metal Ages

The next phase of human evolution has traditionally been defined as the Metal Ages. It started with a less distinctly defined Copper or Chalcolithic Age (3,200–2,300 BCE), and went on to form the Bronze Age (2,300–1,200 BC) – followed by the Iron Age (1,200 – 700 BCE). One can think of it as the starting point technology, pre-scientific technology.

I cite Mesopotamian examples here as clearly showing the most relevant way to our present modern civilisation. Generally, however, it should be borne in mind that the different cradles of civilisation evolved through more or less the same stages separately but in their own time, allowing for exchange of ideas at points of contact.

The Bronze Age was characterised by the use of bronze tools and weapons, and the development of complex urban societies. The wheel was invented at this time, and the first forms of writing started. The agricultural base evolved fully to support the emerging civilisations

Different societies entered the Bronze Age at differing times. Some of the other best known Bronze Age civilisations include Mycenae (Greece), the Indus Valley, and the Shang Dynasty in China.

In the Bronze Age, stone was gradually replaced by bronze. Bronze was made by melting tin and copper, and mixing them together. The bronze could then be poured in to moulds to create useful items, among other things the mass production of bronze swords, axes and shields for expanded armies..

Besides the advance in weaponry, the Bronze Age uplifted civilisation in a number of cardinal ways, namely the wheel including the potter's wheel, and the written word.

Bronze Age civilisations gained a technological advantage due to bronze's harder and more durable properties than other metals available at the time. While terrestrial iron is naturally abundant, the higher temperature required for smelting (1,250 °C) in addition to the greater difficulty of working with it, placed it out of reach of common use. Tin's lower melting point (232 °C) and copper's moderate melting point (1,085 °C) placed both these metals within the capabilities of Neolithic pottery kilns, which date to 6,000 BC

The Chalcolithic period, or Copper Age, was an era of transition when the metal copper was smelted and used, a phenomenon of the eastern Mediterranean regions, from roughly 3,500 to 2,300 BC.

Combining metals into alloys, in particular copper and tin, led to the development of bronze, the chief hard materials in the manufacturing of implements and weapons.. Once they could create the stronger alloy, the Bronze Age began and the Copper Age ended.

Needless to say, the availability of bronze swords and other weapons, superior to their earlier stone and flint instruments, contributed in no small measure to the general increase of belligerence in the region.

Agriculture

The Bronze Age is known primarily for five inventions or achievements in agriculture: irrigation, dedicated fields for planting, the planting of the first cereal crops and legumes, the bronze axe and the bronze buffalo-plough,

The bronze plough could take hard impacts and kept its edge for much longer than the wooden. Suddenly, farmers could till large fields cleared by bronze axes. These tools allowed for food surpluses, grain trading, and the accumulation of wealth.

The most important technical innovation for agriculture in was the adoption, around 1,000 BC, of the moldboard plow and its close relative, the heavy plow

Astronomy- Astrology

During the 8th and 7th centuries BC, The Mesopotamians refined their understandings about the operations of the universe, and kept extensive celestial records, leading to an increasingly predictive approach to planetary study.

This developed alongside and out of the beliefs that since the gods in the heavens ruled man's fate and the motions of the stars and planets controlled the fate of people on earth. the stars could reveal

fortunes. The priests-scribes became "inspectors" for ascertaining or divining the will and intention of the gods through celestial omens – in addition to divination by inspecting the entrails of slaughtered animals. Thus was Babylonian celestial astrology born.

By the 4th century, however, their mathematical methods had progressed enough to calculate future planetary positions with reasonable accuracy, at which point extensive ephemerides (calculation-tables) began to appear.

Economy

The economy of the Bronze Age was based on three axils: agrarian production (agriculture and animal husbandry), trade and artisanship.

Bronze Age trade involved the transport of goods, ideas, and skills, either through reciprocal exchange or by raiding activities that were common at the time. A popular option among the growing city-states and neighbouring foreign peoples was direct conquest.

Topping of the lists for acquisition, by trade or capture, would have been land and agricultural resources, supplies of copper and (exclusively by capture) temple establishments - the latter for their spiritual influence and their temporal as well as astronomical-astrological resources.

I did not read anywhere that gold or silver featured in the economy activity. The tin deposits at Cornwall, England, were responsible for a large proportion of the production of bronze objects during that time.

Cradles of Civilisation

A cradle of civilisation. is a **civilisation** developed independently of other civilisations in other locations. Typically, its civilisation is characterised by its own culture (language, philosophy, religion), within its state or shared body politic, and its people enjoying a common way of life. A cradle of civilisation that has continued successfully to today is the best place to study development of man, including his religion, philosophy and capability to perceive the unknown.

Historians generally acknowledge six cradles of civilization: the Fertile Crescent including Mesopotamia, the Nile Valley in Ancient Egypt, the Indo-Gangetic Plain in Ancient India and the North China Plain in Ancient China (the so-called the "Old World") and the Caral-Supe of coastal Peru and the Olmec of the Mexico Gulf coast.

I have chosen three cradles as the basis for this study

. (a) **The Sumer-Mesopotamia** (the Fertile Crescent) civilisation as one of the two earliest (Egypt being the other) and because is in many respects the happenings there became the historical foundations of modern culture. I treat the Abrahamic religions-cultures as emerging from Sumer.

.(b) **The Indian Cultural Heritage**, today containing the world's largest population, with a connoted history and a common (dharmatic) culture going back to cradle times. It is the largest country today practising the modern democratic system alongside its tradition cultures- religions.

. (c) **The Chinese Traditional Heritage**, because it is the longest civilisation in our history, developing continuously as a single unity from its cradle days through to modern times to become today the second largest population and economy in the world, as well as the lead practitioner and advocate of modern-day totalitarian Communism, in place of the modern democratic system.

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Chapter Three

Mesopotamian Civilisations

Sumer-Akkadia

By 10,200 BC, the fully developed Neolithic cultures emerged within the Fertile Crescent, and diffused into South Asia, Europe and North Africa. Among the notable settlements was Jericho in the Jordan Valley, believed to be the world's earliest established city, dating back to around 9,600 BC and with fortification occurring around 6,800 BC.

Sumerian cuneiform and Egyptian hieroglyphs are considered the earliest true writing systems, both having gradually evolved from proto-writing between 5,600 and 5,300 years ago. These mark the end of pre-historic period.

Societal Evolution

Mesopotamia, or the Fertile Crescent, is historically all that land situated within the Tigris-Euphrates river system. It extends from the northwest including parts of Turkey and Syria, to the Persian Gulf in the southeast, including parts of Kuwait and Iran. Today, Mesopotamia is known as Iraq.

I have chosen the history of Mesopotamia because it has the oldest records and is able most comprehensively to reflect the tempestuous transformation of human society from Neolithic agrarian settlements to form one of the greatest ancient civilisations of the Bronze Age, Babylon. The latter in turn led into the happenings of the Iron Age which followed.

Mesopotamia began as a series of smallish agrarian-based chiefdoms (also referred to as “city-states” but I think incorrectly in the modern context), up and down the Fertile Crescent, with Sumer in the south and Akkadia in the north. Allowing for regional differences, over time, they largely shared the same culture and religious institutions, and of course (with the coming of bronze swords) soon decided to conquer one another.

While Sumer provided much of the foundation culture, the others made significant contributions to the total Mesopotamian achievement, ie. the final greatness of Babylon.

Purely for reference, we tabulate their collective history. There were altogether nine local empires over 2,500 years, of which two were foreign conquerors; and there were three Babylons, the Old, the Middle and Neo-Babylon.

Table 3.1 ⁵
Major Empires of Mesopotamia

Dates (BCE)	Empire	Originating Location	Dynasty	Conquered by
3100-2334	Sumer	South	Sumerian	Akkadians in BC 2334
2600-745	Assyrian	North Conquered Persia to Turkey and Egypt Periodic invasion of South	Early, Old and Middle Assyrian Kingdoms	Longest empire World's greatest army and empire Conquered by Neo Babylon in BC 745
2334-2100	Akkadia	North. Conquered whole	Akkadian	Last UR III in BC 2100
2100-2004	Sumer (Revived)	South Conquered whole	Ur III	Elamites (foreign) sacked Ur in BC 2004. Amorites took over.
1894-1595	Babylonia (Old Kingdom)	Foreign. Conquered south	Amorite	Hittites (foreign) in BC 1595
1570 - 1155	Babylonia (Middle Kingdom)	Foreign Conquered south	Kassite	Assyrians in BC 1155
1250-1100				Bronze Dark Age
745-612	Neo-Assyrian	North Conquered whole	Assyrian	Neo-Babylonians and Medes in BC 612
612-539	Neo-Babylonian	South Conquered whole	Chaldean	Achaemenid (Persian) in BC 539

Sumer Foundations

Facultative Development

The people of Sumer, who go back to the 7th millennium BCE, before the Bronze age, occupied southern Mesopotamia in the region known as Chaldea.

Sumer started as a series of small chiefdoms, and by conquests and re-conquests grew into the major regional empire, eventually with a history that only ended in the late 3rd millennium.

Sumerian cuneiform and Egyptian hieroglyphs are considered the earliest true writing systems, both having gradually evolved from proto-writing between 5,600 and 5,300 years ago. These mark the end of pre-historic period.

⁵ - Extracted from my earlier book "THE COSMOS, The Universe, What it is, Origin and Future"
<https://geraldpillay.wordpress.com/>

At that point when they emerged into recorded history, from about the early 3rd millennium BCE, we find that they had developed into a remarkably sophisticated urbanised civilisation – among the most advanced in the world at that time.

Written Language

It is hard to separate out those items they contributed in total to the record of Mesopotamian “firsts”. But, we must give them credit for the origin of writing on clay tablets, about the end of the 4th millennium BC. The creation of language, using the cuneiform script, became their outstanding contribution to mankind, being the world’s earliest language recording system. It went on to be universally adopted in the Near East (then the centre of the world) for the next three millennia, until the last dated record in AD 75.

Math-Astronomy

Secondly the Sumerians achieved a considerable level of mathematical competence. By 3,000 BC, they developed a complex system of measurements called metrology. Through this, they created arithmetic, algebra and geometry.

The Sumerians developed a sexagesimal system of measurement (base 60) which became universal in Mesopotamia. They divided a circle into 360 sections, thus providing an angle measurement system especially suited to plot cosmological phenomena, and is still in use today.

The Sumerians divided night and day into 12 equal hours each, whose length varied with the seasons as the length of the daylight hours changed. They also divided the astronomical day (our 24 hours) into 12 equal hours, and each hour into 30 smaller units, making a total of 360 units for each day.

The Sumerians were the first to create a calendar by counting 12 lunar months as a year. The lunar calendar was synchronised with the solar year (the seasons) by interspersing a leap month every few years. It is of course a factor of 60.

Not surprisingly, the Sumerians tracked the planets, five at that point visible to the naked eye - Mercury, Venus, Mars, Jupiter and Saturn. They bequeathed centuries of tablets recording these planetary movements to later generations. They even developed predictive skills.

The Sumerians inevitably looked at the visible firmament beyond the planets. They mapped the stars and set out the constellations, many of which have survived to this day.

Sumerians believed that the universe consisted of a flat disk enclosed by a dome. In contrast, later Babylonian cosmology which suggested that the cosmos revolved around circularly with the heavens and the earth being equal and joined as a whole.

Religious Development

The Sumerians practiced a polytheistic religion, worshiping hundreds of deities that were believed to control all natural and societal forces. Each Sumerian city-state had its own patron god, and the people believed humanity was created from clay for the sole purpose of serving and pleasing these deities.

The Sumerian gods and goddesses were anthropomorphic; ie. they were humanoid and had human motivations, and were specific to each city-state. Initially, the head of the city-state was their own deity. In time humans took over, and ruled by divine right. This concept became standard in Mesopotamia. It became a practice for a king to be deified after his death – which could explain the number of gods around.

The gods were seen in human form but possessed supernatural powers, often exhibiting human emotions like love, jealousy, and anger.

The highest-ranking gods included An (god of the heavens), Enlil (god of wind and storms, often the chief god), Enki (god of water and wisdom), and Inanna (goddess of love and war).

The Sumerians believed in a bleak, shadowy underworld called Kur (later known as Kigal), where all mortals' spirits went regardless of their behaviour in life.

At the centre of every major city stood a **ziggurat** —massive stepped pyramidal structure serving as both temple to the patron god and administrative centre. Priests conducted elaborate daily rituals, which included bathing, clothing, and offering grand feasts to the statues representing the gods.

In original Sumerian religion, Marduk was a relatively minor local agricultural deity. Associated with irrigation and farming, he was often linked to the god Asalluḫi and served under Enki (the god of wisdom). He was not a prominent figure in the primary Sumerian pantheon.

The religious capital of Sumer was **Nippur**. Located 160 km south of modern-day Baghdad, it served as the sacred heart of Mesopotamia. It housed the Ekur temple of Enlil, the supreme god of the Sumerian pantheon. Kings sought political legitimisation there.

While Nippur was the pan-Sumerian religious centre used to legitimise kings from other cities, there were other deeply influential religious centres and early cities in the region..

Ur, birthplace of Abraham, was a crucial religious centre that housed the famous Ziggurat of Ur and was a central hub for the worship of the moon god Nanna. When the Sumerians overthrew the Akkadians in 2,004 BCE. Ur served as the capital of Sumer during the Third Dynasty of Ur (Ur III).

Endu Genesis: Creation Mythology

The Sumerians believed in a number of related “creation myths”. In the Eridu Genesis, the universe came into being through a series of cosmic or god births. First, Nammu (the primeval waters) gave birth to Ki (the earth) and An (the sky), who mated together and produced a son named Enlil. Enlil separated heaven from earth and claimed the earth as his domain.

The Sumerian Flood Story and the Sumerian Deluge Myth of the Endu Genesis offer a description of how humanity was created by the gods, and how the office of kingship entered human civilisation.

Their rich mythological narratives, such as the *Epic of Gilgamesh* and various creation and flood myths, profoundly influenced the religious and cultural traditions of later Mesopotamian civilizations.

Epic of Gilgamesh

In the flood myth of the Sumerian Epic of Gilgamesh, the god Enlil decides to destroy the world with a flood because humans have become too noisy. The god Ea, who had created humans out of clay and divine blood, secretly warns the hero and gives him help.

The Epic of Gilgamesh was not written at once. The earliest stories originated as independent Sumerian poems around 2100 BCE. The combined epic was first compiled into a single narrative in Akkadian around 1800 BCE. The most complete version, known as the "Standard Babylonian" version, was compiled between 1300 and 1000 BCE.

Gilgamesh, a semi-divine king, heavily oppressed his people. To check his power, the gods created Enkidu, a wild man living among animals. After a fierce wrestling match, they became inseparable best friends.

Together, they embark on heroic adventures, such as defeating the monster Humbaba and slaying the divine Bull of Heaven sent by the goddess Ishtar. The gods punished this later hubris by striking Enkidu with a fatal illness.

The Quest for Immortality: Devastated by Enkidu's death, Gilgamesh embarks on a perilous journey to find Utnapishtim, the sole survivor of a great flood, hoping to learn the secret of eternal life.

Societal Development

The practice developed in Sumer of recognising their local deity as their king; hence the many deities. In time the king became a human, who ruled by divine right and investiture. This convention became subsequently universal in all Mesopotamian kingdoms. Each local empire developed its own royal line and elite, together with a priest-scribe-astrologer fraternity who jealously guarded their religious practice, their temple, the astronomical records, and their astrology. As temple secrets were not shared, the temple was a major prize in all conquests. In time, the Babylonian temple became the most important temple complex, with Marduk its god recognised as the top deity.

Again, what became the common practice in Mesopotamia, all land was owned royally or by the temple. Farmers paid in taxes (crop sharing) for the right to work them, and additionally indentured for civic projects and war.

Sumer had slaves, usually conquered people or those serving debt bonds. Farmers invariably became debt-bonded. This was the common situation in Mesopotamia.

Only the royals, elite and the temple folk received education, including the higher up ladies in the latter stages. Curiously, the Mesopotamian intelligentsia got side-tracked by math and astronomy into astrology and did not develop philosophical and scientific inquiry.

In time, Mesopotamian kingdoms developed a growing urban middle class of craftsmen, artisans, merchants, and a service sector. Needless to say, they maintained large armies.

Ultimately, Mesopotamia was a mosaic of conquered kingdoms, each with its own capital, local palace and temple, knitted under the suzerainty of larger warring empires, including Sumer and its successors, lastly Neo Babylon.

Akkadian Consolidation

The first empire to rule all of Mesopotamia was the Akkadian Empire of Sargon, from 2,334–2,279 BCE. The Akkadians lived in northern Mesopotamia. Babylon was then a small town on the banks of the Euphrates, some 80 Km south of present day Bagdad, founded around 2,300 BC by Akkadian-speaking peoples.

Sargon showed special deference to the Sumerian deities. His daughter was installed as a priestess to Nanna at the Sumerian temple in Ur.

After the re-conquest of the Akkadian Empire by a resurgent Sumer, the people of Mesopotamia coalesced into two major Akkadian-speaking nations: Babylonia in the south and Assyria in the north.

Akkadian gradually replaced Sumerian as a spoken language in the from around 2000 BC, but Sumerian continued to be used as a sacred, ceremonial, literary and scientific language in fact until the 1st century AD.

Babylon

Amorite Babylonia (Old Babylon)

The Elamites, a warring neighbour from Persia, sacked Ur in 2004 BCE, ending Sumerian history, and were in turn ousted by the Amorites in 1894 BCE, beginning the “Amorite” period” of Mesopotamian history. The Amorites, a Semitic nomadic people moved into Mesopotamia and dominated the region for 400 years, from 1,894-to 1,595 BCE

A small Amorite-ruled state emerged in 1,894 BC which came to be known as Babylonia, and included the minor port town of Babylon. It expanded to become the First Babylonian Dynasty of the Amorites, and Babylon grew to be a major capital city.

Its sixth king was **Hammurabi**, who ruled from 1,782 to 1,750 BCE. He conquered Elam and the surrounding city states, and ousted the king of Assyria in the north, bringing almost the whole of Mesopotamia under Babylonian rule..

Hammurabi gave the region stability, transforming what had been an unstable collection of city-states into an empire that spanned the fertile crescent. A great literary revival followed. One of the most important works of this time was the compilation of a code of laws, made by his order, known as the **Code of Hammurabi** - only found in 1901. This code was one of the first written codes of law in recorded history. It gave Babylonia the edge over the other kingdoms. Hammurabi turned Babylon into a rich, powerful and influential city. The Code of Hammurabi helped Babylon surpass other cities.

Babylonia, however, was short-lived. The empire fell apart after Hammurabi's death and reverted back to a small kingdom for several centuries

Though many cultures co-existed in Mesopotamia, Babylonian culture gained a degree of prominence among the literate classes throughout the Middle East.

Kassie Babylonia (Middle Babylon)

Next were the Kassites, another foreign group who conquered Babylon and ruled Mesopotamia for 400 years, adopting parts of the Babylonian culture, including Hammurabi's code of laws.

The Kassites controlled Babylonia from 1,570 BCE until 1,155 BCE. They went on to conquer the southern part of Mesopotamia.

The Kassites were a small military aristocracy but efficient rulers and locally popular, and their 400-year reign laid the groundwork for the further evolution of Babylonian culture. This welcomed a wide range of new arrivals mainly nomadic tribes under powerful sheiks, including Elamites, Medes, Aramaeans

Kassite kings established trade and diplomacy with neighbouring kingdoms, and the Kassite royal house intermarried with their royal families. There were foreign merchants in Babylon and other cities, and Babylonian merchants were active in Egypt, Assyria and Anatolia.

The new arrivals were to prove a heady mixture. The Kassites were finally ousted by the Elamites in 1,155 BCE. There followed over 400 years of weak kings from some seven dynasties, The Neo-Assyrian Empire from the north intervened in 745 BCE and finally conquered Babylon in 729 B under King Tiglath-Pileser III.

One of our great Babylonian heritages compiled, or at least completed, during Kassite times was the *Enuma Anu Enlil* (EAE), a series of 68 to 70 tablets dealing with Babylonian astrology, mainly a substantial collection of some 6,500 and 7,000 omens, which interpret a wide variety of celestial and atmospheric phenomena in terms relevant to the king and state.

The Assyrian Interlude

Assyrian control of Babylonia was neither stable nor continuous and the century of Assyrian rule included several unsuccessful revolts, basically different coalitions of new arrivals, The "Babylonians as they now called themselves, led by the Chaldeans sheiks, finally broke free defeating the Assyrians at Nineveh in 612 B.C, forming the Neo Babylonian Empire, also known as the Chaldean Empire.

Assyria was a major civilisation which existed in northern Mesopotamia as a city-state from the 21st century BCE to the 14th century BCE, and eventually expanded into an empire from the 14th century BCE spanning from the early Bronze Age to the Late Iron Age.

Historians typically divide ancient Assyrian history into the Early (2,600–2,025 BCE), Old (2,025–1,364 BCE), Middle (1363–912 BCE), Neo Assyrian (911–609 BCE), and post-Imperial (609 BCE–c. CE 240).

Assyrian power fluctuated over time. They underwent several periods of foreign rule or domination before Assyria rose the early 14th century BC as the Middle Assyrian Empire. In the Middle and Neo-Assyrian periods Assyria was one of the two major Mesopotamian kingdoms, alongside Babylonia in the south,

In the Neo-Assyrian period, the Assyrian army was the strongest military power in the world and ruled the largest empire then yet assembled, spanning from parts of modern-day Iran in the east to Egypt in the west.

The Assyrians invented a new policy towards the conquered in which they would force a large number of the people they conquered to migrate to other areas of the empire; creating a melting pot culture within the Middle East region.

It was King Sargon II who dismantled the northern Kingdom of Israel in 722 BC and transported some 10 tribes of Jews to Mesopotamia – for ever. King Sennacherib failed to do the same with the southern Kingdom of Judah in 701 BC, and it was left to King Nebuchadnezzar II finally to do so in 587 BC – for 50 years' of their Babylonian captivity.

The Neo-Assyrian Empire collapsed in the face of the combined attacks of the newly re-established Neo-Babylonian empire of the Chaldeans and their allies, the Medes.

It is fitting we mention the Library of Ashurbanipal which is the oldest known systematically organised library in the world, established in Nineveh by the Neo-Assyrian king Ashurbanipal (668-627 BCE) to preserve the history and culture of Mesopotamia. In the great library in their capital city of Nineveh, is the tablet that is our single greatest source of knowledge today concerning the Mesopotamian cultures

The Bronze Dark Age

Meanwhile, the world had descended into a Bronze Dark Age, from about 1,250 to 1,100 BCE. It centred on the decline of the ancient Greek people of Mycenae, extending to the Aegean region, Anatolia (Turkey), the Egyptians, the Levant and Mesopotamia.

One reason given is that these elitist “palace-based” societies had collectively exceeded their resource base, becoming dependent on supplies from increasing distances at greater prices and suffering increases shortages of manpower and skills. Needless to say elitist societies tend to luxurious living and grandiose civic projects. The inevitable solution was raising larger armies to acquire more resources. They invariably marched out to conquer the same, including slaves. Sooner or later, the internal productivity would fail to support the increasing consumption expenditure – both of the armies and the civic projects, and the luxury living.

The Iron Age

The first workings in iron began in Sumer, about 1500 BCE, and replaced Bronze during the latter's dark age. Iron is the chief constituent of our planet (35%) and plentiful, but required a higher temperature (above 1,500 degrees Celsius) to smelt. One advantage was that it was amenable to “industrial” production. One could mould many products in large quantities. When steel was invented (iron tempered with carbon) mankind was set to build the next stage of civilisation on the superstructure of Iron – until electronics.

It was the Iron Age that enabled the ancient and modern empires to build such large armies and war machines until the 20th century, playing a determining part in our evolution.

Flowering of Mesopotamian Culture (Neo-Babylon)

Societal Development

By the 7th century, the native Babylonians had lost their old identities and had assimilated into a unified "Babylonian" culture

The Neo-Babylonian Empire was perched on the boundary of the Bronze and Iron Ages, enjoying the technology of both, while bolstered by the military skills and resources and the sheer numbers of the allies. Along with armour and iron helmets, new weapons were introduced which were crossbows including the halberd. Wheels and chariots were the pride of ancient Sumer-Akkadian culture.

Nebuchadnezzar II (605 - 561 BC) was the second and greatest king of the Chaldean dynasty of Babylonia. Besides Mesopotamia (including Assyria), he conquered Judah, Palestine, Syria and Licia in Turkey in the west down to Elan in the south in Persia. Ruling for 43 years, the longest-reigning king of the Babylonian dynasty, he was among the most powerful rulers in the world.

Historically known as Nebuchadnezzar the Great, he is typically famous for his military campaigns, for his construction projects in his capital, Babylon, and for the role he plays in Jewish history.

In 587 BC, Nebuchadnezzar II conquered the Kingdom of Judah, destroyed Solomon's Temple at Jerusalem, and deported the Jews to Babylon.

Facultative Development

The Babylonian pantheon of gods began with the Sumerians, many tied to the planets, a tradition carried on by the Greeks and Romans. They believed that the king god was Marduk, eventually the patron of Babylon. One source enumerated some 2,100 deities of various orders of importance counted out of known tablets so far. The god Enlil was also called Marduk,

The temple at Babylon was the centre of astronomy and astrology, as well as the most important temple in Neo Babylon. In the later stages, the astronomical community continued to stranglehold the intellectual development of the Babylonians, so that astrology remained the focus of its intellectual life. Although the higher social levels were educated, including ladies, I saw little of independent intellectual life (as among the Greeks). The preoccupations were politics, business, conquest and a huge professional army.

Wonders of the Ancient World

The Neo-Babylonians were most famous for their architecture, notably at their capital city, Babylon. Largely rebuilt, this ancient city included its walls and seven gates.

Nebuchadnezzar is also remembered as a great builder-king. His building inscriptions record work done to numerous temples, notably the restoration of the Esagila, the main temple of Marduk, and the completion of the Etemenanki, the great ziggurat dedicated to him. The temple was located south of Etemenanki, and it measured 660 feet (200 m) on its longest side, and its three vast courtyards were surrounded by intricate chambers. The whole complex reflected centuries of building and rebuilding by the Babylonian kings, especially Nebuchadnezzar. The tremendous wealth of Esagila was recorded by the Greek historian Herodotus who is believed to have visited Babylon in the 5th century BC.

At its northern ceremonial entrance was the Ishtar Gate. The projects included restoration of the existing South Palace inside the city walls, and the construction of a completely new North Palace on the other side of the walls facing the gate, as well as the restoration of Babylon's Processional Street, and the Gate itself. The latter is one of the Seven Wonders of the Ancient World.

And there were also the fabled Hanging Gardens of Babylon, another of the Seven Wonders of the Ancient World. They were a remarkable feat of engineering with an ascending series of tiered gardens containing a wide variety of trees, shrubs, and vines, resembling a large green mountain constructed of mud bricks. According to one legend, the Hanging Gardens were built by Nebuchadnezzar alongside a grand palace known as The Marvel of Mankind, for his Median wife Queen Amyris, because she missed the green hills and valleys of her homeland.

The other great building projects by Nebuchadnezzar included the Nar-Shamash, a canal to bring water from the Euphrates close to the city of Sippar. He also began work on the Royal Canal, a great canal linking the Euphrates to the Tigris which in time completely transformed the agriculture of the

region, but the structure was not completed until the reign of Nabonidus (556 to 539 BC), who ruled as the last king.

Babylonian Religion

The religion of ancient Babylonia was a complex, polytheistic belief system inherited and heavily adapted from the earlier Sumerian civilisation. They worshiped a vast pantheon of anthropomorphic gods and goddesses who controlled natural forces, human destinies, and the social order. The Babylonians worshiped hundreds of deities, but the most prominent included:

- . **Marduk** : The supreme patron god of Babylon.
- . **Ishtar** : The goddess of love, fertility, and war.
- . **Ea (Enki)** : The god of wisdom, magic, and freshwater.
- . **Shamash** : The sun god who represented justice and law.
- . **Sin (Nanna)** : The moon god.

In original Sumerian religion, Marduk was minor local agricultural deity, associated with irrigation and farming. In the 3rd millennium BCE, Marduk became patron of the insignificant riverport of Babylon. When King Hammurabi unified Mesopotamia and established Babylon as the imperial capital (18th century BCE), the city's patron god required a more prestigious role. To justify his newfound supremacy, Babylonian priests elevated Marduk by merging him with older, more established Sumerian deities. He absorbed the wisdom of his father Enki and the warrior traits of Ninurta, taking on over 50 divine names and aspects. The Babylonian creation epic (*Enuma Elish*) cemented his ultimate rule. In this myth, Marduk defeats the chaos goddess Tiamat, creates the universe, and is declared the king of the gods. His main centre of worship was the great Esagila temple, which featured the towering Etemenanki ziggurat (the historical inspiration for the Biblical Tower of Babel)

Conquest

In the year 539 BC, King Cyrus the Great of the (Persian) Achaemenid Empire conquered Neo Babylon, ending the gloriously history of Sumer-Babylon.

Achaemenian Empire (Persia)

The empire had its beginnings in the 7th century BC, when the Persians nomads settled in the southwestern portion of the Iranian plateau in the region of Persis. From this region, Cyrus The Great (590-529 BC) rose and defeated the resident Median and Elamite Empires, following which he conquered Babylonia (with Assyria) in 539 BC.. Cyrus then formally established the Achaemenid Empire, also called the First Persian Empire, in 550 BC.

The Achaemenid empire reached its greatest extent under Xerxes 1 (519-465 BC) who conquered most of northern and central Greece (including Macedonia!) . At its greatest territorial extent, the Achaemenid Empire stretched, some 5.7 square million km, from Egypt, the Balkans and Eastern Europe, through Central Asia, to the Indus Valley, the largest in history up to then. There were long drawn out Greco-Persian wars from 499-429 BC, waged by Darius The Great, against the Greek city states, which finally halted the Persians' Greek aspirations.

The Achaemenid empire (550–330 BC) was succeeded by the Seleucid, Parthian and Sasanian empires, who governed Iran for almost 1,000 years, making Iran a leading power. Persia's arch-rival during this time was the Roman Empire and its successor, the Byzantine empire.

Georg W. F Hegel⁶, in his work *The Philosophy of History* introduces the Persian Empire as the "first empire that passed away" and its people as the "first historical people" in history. "The Persian Empire was the first empire in the modern sense, consisting of a number of states, which are indeed dependent, but which have retained their own individuality, their manners, and laws. The general enactments, binding upon all, did not infringe upon their political and social idiosyncrasies, but even protected and maintained them; so that each of the nations that constitute the whole, had its own form

⁶ - https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Georg_Wilhelm_Friedrich_Hegel

of constitution. Thereby, a stop was put to that barbarism and ferocity with which the nations had been wont to carry on their destructive feuds.”

Will Durant⁷, the American historian and philosopher, at an address before the Iran-American Society on 21 April 1948, stated:

“Then for the first time in known history an empire almost as extensive as the United States received an orderly government, a competence of administration, a web of swift communications, a security of movement by men and goods on majestic roads, equalled before our time only by the zenith of Imperial Rome”.

Societal Development

The Achaemenids allowed a certain amount of regional autonomy. A satrapy was an administrative unit, on a geographical basis. A “satrap” (governor) was the governor, a 'general' supervised military recruitment and ensured order, and a 'state secretary' kept the official records. The general and the state secretary reported directly to the satrap as well as the central government. At differing times, there were between 20 and 30 satrapies. Darius I revolutionised the economy by placing it on the silver and gold coinage.

The satrapies were linked by a 2,500-kilometer highway. It featured stations and caravanserais at specific intervals. Relays of mounted couriers could reach the remotest of areas in fifteen days. Cyrus also formed an innovative postal system throughout the empire, based on several relay stations.

The creation of a professional army was necessary for both maintenance of the peace and to enforce the authority of the king in cases of rebellion and foreign threat. Cyrus the Great created an organised army, including an “Immortals” unit, consisting of 10,000 highly trained soldiers

The Persian cavalry was crucial, and was divided into four groups: the chariot archers, horse cavalry, the camel cavalry and the war elephants. The empire also had a huge navy for extended conquests in Greece, Egypt and in the Gulf and defend the Caspian.

The Aramaic language was adopted as a “vehicle for written communication between the different regions of the vast empire with its different peoples and languages. The use of a single official language, greatly contributed to the astonishing success of the Achaemenids in holding their far-flung empire together

Facultative Development

The Iranians worshipped an ancient deity Mithra. His temples and symbols were the most widespread and most festivals were dedicated to him. He was the deity of covenants, light, oaths, justice, the Sun, of contracts, and friendship. Mithra was also a judicial figure, an all-seeing protector of Truth (*Asha*), and the guardian of cattle, the harvest, and the waters. He seemed monotheistic and would continue to be worshipped by the Roman army before being replaced by Christianity.

Religion

Religious toleration has been described as a “remarkable feature” of the Achaemenid Empire. The Old Testament reports that, by the Edict of Cyrus The Great, he released the Jewish people from Babylonian captivity in 539–530 BC to return to their homeland. He assisted them rebuild the Second Temple, as well as other sacred sites in the empire.

It was during the Achaemenid period that Zoroastrianism reached southwestern Iran, where it came to be accepted by the rulers and through them became a defining element of Persian culture. The religion was not only accompanied by a formalisation of the concepts and divinities of the traditional Iranian pantheon but also introduced several novel ideas, including that of freewill.

⁷ - https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Will_Durant

The Greek historian Herodotus⁸, who visited the empire, wrote: "[the Persians] have no images of the gods, no temples nor altars, and consider the use of them a sign of folly.... The Persians offered sacrifice to: "the sun and moon, to the earth, to fire, to water, and to the winds."...They raised no altar, light no fire, pour no libations...No prayer or offering can be made without a magus (Zoroastrian priest) present". Over time, the Persians did adopt cult images

Zoroastrianism was founded in Persia in the 6th century BCE by the priest Zarathustra, known to the Greeks as Zoroaster. Zarathustra reformed existing Persian polytheism with his teachings about the highest god, Ahura Mazdā, and his primeval clash with Angra Mainyu, the Destructive Spirit.

At its core, Zoroastrianism emphasizes a never-ending battle between good and evil — a contest between the religion's God, Ahura Mazda, and an evil spirit, Ahriman. Believers have the freedom to make good or bad choices; they were exhorted by Zoroaster to think good thoughts, say good words and do good deeds. Zoroastrianism was essentially monotheistic.

The Greeks, and later on the Romans, adopted the best features of the Persian method of governing an empire. The empire was instrumental in the spread of their religion as far east as China.

The Arab-Muslim conquest of Persia was a major military campaign undertaken between 632 and 654 CE. it led to the fall of the Sasanian empire and the eventual decline of Zoroastrianism and persecution of the latter prompted many of them to flee eastward to India.

Conquest

Alexander The Great of Macedon first defeated the Persian armies at Granicus (334 BC). Afterwards, he marched on Susa and Persepolis which surrendered in early 330 BC. By 325 BC, he had conquered Persian India. He died in 323 BC in Babylon.

Alexander generally kept the original Achaemenid administrative structure. Upon Alexander's death in 323 BC, his empire was divided among his generals, the resulting in a number of smaller states. The largest of these, which held sway over the Iranian plateau, was the Seleucid empire. Native Iranian rule would be restored by the Parthian empire of northeastern Iran over the course of the 2nd century BCE.

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⁸ -<https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Herodotus>

Chapter Three A

Mesopotamian Religions

(Editorial Note: All the Mesopotamian Religions, irrespective of the dates of their origin, have crossed over the evolutionary Turning Point 3 and are currently extant in the Global Society within the democratic system, and therefore continue to offer their own options of a future evolutionary pathway.

The Mithridatic-Zoroastrian Tradition

Table 3A.1
Mithridatic-Zoroastrian Time-Line

2000-1000 BCE	Migration from Central Asia of Indo-Aryans and Indo-Iranians south
700 BCE	Medes, an Indo-Iranian tribe, settled in NW Iran establishing Kingdom of Media.
612 BCE	Allied with Babylon, conquered Assyria
539 BCE	Conquered by and absorbed into Achaemenid (Persian) empire
336-323 BCE	Achaemenid Empire Conquered by Alexander the Great
310- 60 BCE	Part of Seleucid Empire
60 BCE – 476 CE CE750=1258 CE	Roman Empire

Searches for the earliest monotheistic religion pointed to the possibility that it was Mithraism. This was the religion of the Medes. Today Mithraism does not exist independently, but is absorbed in Zoroastrianism.

The Medes were an Indo-Iranian people, who originated in Central Asia and who, around the end of the 2nd millennium BCE, migrated to northern and western Iran, establishing the kingdom of Media.

They spoke an Iranian language closely related to Old Persian and were a significant power in the region. They allied with the Babylonians to defeat the Assyrians in 612 BCE, which led to the fall of Nineveh and the division of the Assyrian Empire. The Medes were later absorbed into the Achaemenid Empire by Cyrus II in about 550 BCE. The Medes were an Iron Age Iranian people.

Mithraism

The Medes practiced a form of ancient Iranian religion, often referred to as pre-Zoroastrian Mazdaism, or Mithraism. This belief system was characterised by the worship of **Ahura Mazda** as the supreme deity and included other deities like Mithra and Anahita. The Medes were also associated with the Magi, who were a priestly tribe responsible for religious rituals and chants.

The religion of the Medes is considered a precursor to Zoroastrianism. The Medes' religion had a significant influence on the development of Zoroastrianism and later Persian religions.

Mithra was an ancient Indo-Iranian god revered for his roles as the god of covenants, light, justice, and contracts, and as a protector of truth and friendship.

First of all, he was the god of contract and mutual obligation. In a cuneiform tablet of the 15th century BCE that contains a treaty between the Hittites and the Mitanni, Mithra is invoked as the god of oath.

He was also associated with the sun and the sun god. Mithra was also the god of the sun, of the shining light that beholds everything, and, hence, was invoked in oaths.

He was probably also the god of kings. He was the god of mutual obligation between the king and his warriors and, hence, the god of war. He was also the god of justice, which was guaranteed by the king. Whenever people observed justice and contract, they venerated Mithra.

Roman Mithraism

In the Roman Empire, Mithra became the central figure of a mystery cult, with his iconography and mythology evolving to incorporate Roman beliefs. He lost any monotheistic identity by then.

The Roman cult of Mithras centered on the bull-killing myth, where Mithra is depicted slaying a bull to create the world and then emerging from the bull's body. This cult, known primarily through archaeological evidence, featured secret initiations and rituals.

As Mithras was adopted into the Roman Empire, he took on characteristics associated with the Roman sun god, Sol Invictus, further solidifying his association with light and the sun.

Known as Mithras in the Roman Empire during the 2nd and 3rd centuries CE, this deity was honoured as the patron of loyalty to the emperor. After the acceptance of Christianity by the emperor Constantine in the early 4th century, Mithraism rapidly declined.

Mithraic sanctuaries and dedications to Mithra are numerous at Rome and Ostia, along the military frontier, even in Britain. When they do occur, the dedicator is usually a provincial governor or an imperial official. Within a few generations, the Roman world had completely assimilated the Persian god.

Zoroastrianism

Pre-Zoroastrian

Before the religious reformer Zarathustra (Greek name Zoroaster) gained influence in the region during the 6th century BCE, the Iranians had a polytheistic religion and Mithra was the most important of their gods.

As a member of the Iranian "ahuric" triad, along with Ahura Mazda and Ahura Berezaiti (Apam Napat), Mithra was an exalted figure. Together with Rashnu "Justice" and Sraosha "Obedience", Mithra was one of the three judges at the Chinvat Bridge, the "Bridge of Separation" that all souls must cross.

The cult of Mithras emphasised loyalty, the importance of vows, and the idea of the soul's journey to liberation. Mithraic rituals involved elaborate ceremonies held in underground caves, with seven initiatory grades representing different planets.

In Mithraism, Mithra was seen as a mediator between the god of light, Ahura Mazda, and humanity, offering salvation and protection.

Zarathustra @ Zoroaster

Zarathustra, also known as Zoroaster, who lived around the 6th century BCE, founded Zoroastrianism, a monotheistic religion that emphasized the worship of one god, Ahura Mazda, and the cosmic conflict between good and evil.

Sources indicate that Zoroaster was probably a priest who experienced a vision from Ahura Mazda who appointed him to preach the truth.

Zoroaster was born into a noble family, and was part of a Vedic tradition similar to Hinduism. The revelation from Ahura Mazda led him to reject the existing polytheistic beliefs and embrace the concept of a single, all-powerful god.

He taught that Ahura Mazda occupied the centre of a kingdom of justice that promised immortality and bliss.

Confident in the truth revealed to him, he did not try to overthrow belief in the older Iranian religion. He did, however, try to reform it on the basis of existing social and economic values.

Zoroaster's teachings were initially met with resistance but eventually gained traction, becoming the state religion of the Achaemenid and Parthian Empires.

Zoroaster's teachings, recorded in the Gathas (the oldest Zoroastrian scriptures), emphasised the importance of good thoughts, words, and deeds, and the need to align oneself with Ahura Mazda by living a virtuous life. He also preached about a cosmic war between Ahura Mazda and the evil spirit, Angra Mainyu. Zoroaster's influence extended beyond his own time, impacting the development of later monotheistic faiths like Judaism, Christianity, and Islam.

Despite initial resistance, Zoroaster's teachings spread throughout Persia, particularly after he converted the king Vishtaspa, who then embraced the new faith. Zoroastrianism became the national religion and remained influential for centuries.

While the details of Zoroaster's death are not definitively known, one account suggests he was murdered by his enemies. Regardless of his demise, Zoroaster's legacy as the founder of Zoroastrianism and a prophet with profound moral and religious teachings continues to shape the history of religion and philosophy.

What Zoroastrians Believes

Zoroastrianism also called Mazdayasnā, is an Iranian religion centred on the Avesta and the teachings of Zarathustra Spitarna, who is more commonly referred to by the name Zoroaster.

Its adherents exalt an uncreated, benevolent and all wise deity, known as Ahura Mazda. who is hailed as the supreme being of the universe. Opposed to Ahura Mazda is Angra Manyu, who is personified as a destructive spirit and the adversary of all things that are good.

As such, the Zoroastrian religion combines a dualistic cosmology of good and evil with an eschatological outlook predicting the ultimate triumph of good.

According to scholars, Ahura Mazda is an uncreated, omniscient, omnipotent and benevolent God who has created the spiritual and material existences out of infinite light, and maintains the cosmic law of Asha. He is the first and most invoked spirit in Yasna and is unrivalled, has no equals and presides over all creation.

Notably, Angra Mainyu is not a creation of Ahura Mazda but an independent entity. The belief in Ahura Mazda, the "Lord of Wisdom" who is considered an all-encompassing deity and the only existing one, is the foundation of Zoroastrianism.

Zoroastrian doctrine holds that, within this cosmic dichotomy, human beings have the choice between Asha (truth, cosmic order), the principle of righteousness or "rightness" and Druj (falsehood, deceit), the essential nature of Angra Mainyu that expresses itself as greed, wrath, and envy.

Thus, the central moral precepts of the religion are good thoughts (hwnata), good words, (hakhta) and good deeds (hvarshta), which are recited in many prayers and ceremonies.

Many of the practices and beliefs of ancient Iranian religion can still be seen in Zoroastrianism, such as reverence for nature and its elements, such as water. Fire is held by Zoroastrians to be

particularly sacred as a symbol of Ahura Mazda. himself, serving as a focal point of Zoroastrian places of worship.

The central beliefs and practices of Zoroastrianism are contained in the Avesta, a compendium of sacred texts assembled over several centuries. Its oldest and most central component are the Gathas purported to be the direct teachings of Zoroaster and his account of conversations with Ahura Mazda. These writings are part of a major section of the Avesta called the Yasna, which forms the core of Zoroastrian liturgy.

Zoroaster's religious philosophy divided the early Iranian gods of proto-Indo-Iranian paganism into emanations of the natural world—the “ahura” and the “daeva”; the former class consisting of divinities to be revered and the latter class consisting of divinities to be rejected and condemned.

Zoroastrians treat Ahura Mazda as the supreme god, but believe in lesser divinities known as Yazatas, who share some similarities with the angels in Abrahamic religions. The yazatas collectively are “the good powers under Ahura Mazda”, who is “the greatest of the yazatas”

The origins of Yazata are varied, with many also being featured as gods in Hinduism, or other Iranian religions. In modern Zoroastrianism, the Yazata are considered holy emanations of the creator, always devoted to him and obey the will of Ahura Mazda.

Opinions vary among scholars as to whether Zoroastrianism is monotheistic. Zoroastrianism may have roots in the 2nd millennium BCE, but was first recorded in the mid-6th century BCE

it was the official religion of successive Iranian polities, beginning with the Achaemenid empire which formalised and institutionalised many of its tenets and rituals, and ending with the Sasanian empire which revitalised the faith and standardised its teachings.

In the 7th century CE, the rise of Islam marked the decline of Zoroastrianism. The Muslims prompted much of the community to migrate to the Indian sub-continent, where they became the progenitors of today's Parsis.

Historically, the unique features of Zoroastrianism, such as its conception of heaven, hell, angels, monotheism, belief in free will, and the day of judgement, among other concepts, may have influenced other religious and philosophical systems, including the Abrahamic religions, Gnosticism, Northern Buddhism, and Greek philosophy.

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The Abrahamic Religious Traditions

Palestine

It is recorded in the Old Testament of the Jews that somewhere around 2092 BCE (this date is not recorded but historically established) Yahweh, their God, the Supreme Being, spoke directly to Abraham, at the ancient royal city of Ur of the Chaldeans, then a part of Sumer-Akkadia. Abraham and his family were to migrate to Canaan, Palestine, to become his chosen people. After a sojourn in Haran of about 60 years they arrived at the Promised Land in and around 1943 BCE.

Abraham, Sarah and their son Isaac went on to form the **Jewish** nation, the Chosen People. They were originally Hebrew, but became known later as Israelites.

Abraham's other son, Ishmael, and his mother, Abraham's Egyptian slave Hagar, were relocated in the desert areas of Ber-sheba and Paran to the south. They went on to form the **Arabic** peoples.

The Israelites were enclaved in Egypt, from 1671 to 1446⁹ BCE, and were freed by Moses across the Red Sea, finally returning to Canaan after 40 years around 1406 BCE, by then comprising 12 tribes. They and the Arabs have lived in Palestine since, sometimes peacefully, mainly squabbling for territory.

Palestine, generally thought of as extending south from Lebanon-Syria to the Negev-Egypt, has historically been occupied by a number of city-states, chiefdoms and kingdoms. From time to time, they conquered one another or were conquered by neighbouring empires.

On their arrival ex Egypt, the Israelites had to fight a coalition of five Amorite kings for their place. They conquered most of Palestine.

After the reigns of King David (1010 to 971 BCE) and King Solomon (971 to 931 BCE), they set up the twin kingdom-states of Israel to the north and Judah to the south. The Northern Kingdom was conquered by the Assyrian Empire in 722 BCE and most of its inhabitants were exiled.

The Southern Kingdom of Judah remained until 586 BCE, when Nebuchadnezzar of Neo-Babylon conquered it, exiling many of its people. The people of Judah became known as Jews, and the Chosen People have been known as Jews since.

The Kingdom of Judah, located in the highlands of southern Palestine west of the Jordan-Dead Sea, centred around Jerusalem, became the province of Yehud, in time synonymous with Judea.

The result is that modern Jews are descended from this southern Kingdom of Judah, plus some northern refugees.

Today, their modern political identity is Israeli (citizen of the Republic of Israel in Palestine), while the term Jew refers more to an adherent of Judaism, the Jewish religion.

In 550 BCE, the Achaemenid (Persian) Empire conquered Neo-Babylon, and in 539 BCE Cyrus the Great issued the "Edict of Cyrus" allowing exiled Jews to return to Jerusalem and rebuild the Second Temple.

The Kingdom of Judah was no more, but the Jews operated as the autonomous province of Yehudi Medinata under the Archimedean empire, which lasted for some 200 years, with the High Priest of Israel emerging as a central religious and political leader.

Then, Alexander the Great of Macedonia conquered the latter empire (and the world) briefly from 334 to 323 BCE before he died. At first, Palestine then came under the rule of the (Hellenic) Ptolemaic Egypt. The latter were in turn conquered by the (Hellenic) Seleucid empire in 179 BCE. Thereafter, the Jews became the province of Yehud of the latter - from "Yehudah", Jacob's original name, in time synoious with the Romanised "Judea".

The Seleucids, Antiochus IV, began an oppressive programme of Hellenisation of the Jewish way of life, including appearing naked in the gym, the installation of a pagan idol in the Second Temple and the prohibition of Jewish religious practices.

In 164-160 BCE, the Jews carried out the Maccabees Revolt. The revolt began when Mattathias, a Jewish priest, and his sons, most notably Judas Maccabeus, led a rebellion against both Seleucid forces and Hellenised Jews. Their efforts culminated in the recapture and rededication of the Jerusalem Temple in December 164 BCE, an event celebrated in the Jewish festival of Hanukkah. The revolt continued until 134 BCE, by then successfully establishing the autonomous Kingdom of the Hasmoneans.

Finally, the Seleucids and Palestine (inclusive of the Hasmonean kingdom) were conquered by the Roman empire in 63 BCE. The latter proceeded to appoint Herod to be King of the Jews. Herod was a scion of a high-ranking Idumean family from the south of Palestine converted to Judaism. With Roman

⁹ - An alternative calculation gives this date as 1321, which shifts their arrival at the Promised land to 1281.

help, he defeated the Hasmoneans in 37 BCE to take over Judea, He carried prodigious public works, including expansion of the Second Temple. He died in 4 BCE.

The Romans then appointed his three sons to be Tetrarchs of the divided kingdom, with one change of relevance: Herod Antipas' was given Galilee, previously not part of Judea, Later, when Archelaus was removed, Judea proper was placed directly under a Roman governor, Pontius Pilate.

That set the scenario for the birth of Jesus Christ as a Roman subject in BCE 4 and his Crucifixion and Death in CE 30.

Judaism

Herewith a synopsis of the history of the Jews. The story is familiar, but the dates I have put in by quick research and calculation – readers using them should check them out independently.

Table 3A.2
Jewish Old Testament History

Date	Event	
2092 BCE	Terah took his son Abram, his grandson Lot, and his daughter-in-law Sarah, his son Abram's wife, and set out from Ur of the Chaldeans to go to the land of Canaan. But when they came to Haran, they settled there. Terah died.	
1943 BCE	Abraham leaves for the Promised Land (Canaan) from Haran , and Lot went with him. Abram was 75 years old.	
1844 BCE	Sarah gives Hagar, her Egyptian slave girl, to Abram in order to sire a son. Ishmael born to Abraham and Hagar in the land of Canaan. Abraham was 86 years old.	
1858 BCE	Isaac is born to Abraham of Sarah .	
	Hagar and Ishmael are both cast out, and they wander the desert of Beer-sheba (which is at the edge of southern Judah). Later, they move to the desert of Paran .	
1829 BCE	Abraham sacrifices Issac, who was 15 years old or thereabout.	
1818 BCE	Isaac marries Rebecca. Jacob & Esau born to Isaac.	
1792 BCE	Isaac is the heir of all things that Abraham has (but, most importantly, of the covenant of God with Abraham). Death of Abraham.	
1788 BCE	Death of Ismael.	
1741 BCE	Jacob married Leah and Rachel, and has 12 sons.	
1700-1693 BCE	Joseph was born.	
1775 BCE	Joseph arrived in Egypt during the reign of the Twelfth Dynasty, arguably the zenith of Egypt's power. Shortly before this era, Upper and Lower Egypt had been unified under one ruler, and now Egyptian influence expanded south and east.	
1693 BCE	Joseph sold into slavery when he was 17 years old	
1674 BCE	Nine years of slavery, then released, and promoted to vizier.	
1671 BCE	Joseph's family settled in Egypt, starting the Israelite people.	
1658 BCE	Death of Jacob	
1590 BCE	Death of Joseph.	
1446 CE (alt. date: 1240)	Moses. The Red Sea. Exodus	

1444 BCE (alt date: 1238)	Mt Sinai The Ten Commandants. .38 years in the desert.	
1406 BCE (alt; date 1200)	Israelites cross the Jordan, enter Canaan	
1000 -962, 962-920, 957, 930 BCE	Reigns of David and Solomon. First Temple, division of Israel	
721 BCE	Assyrian conquest of 10 northern tribes of Israel	
587 BCE	Neo Babylonian conquest of Judah. The Exile.	
530 -519 BCE	Edict of Cyrus. Return to Jerusalem, Second Temple. The Pentateuch written. Prophecies of Messiahs	

Patriarchs

The Covenant

Somewhere in the turn into the second millennium, God instructed Abraham to leave his home in Ur of Chaldea and travel to Canaan, the Promised Land, which is today known as Israel. God asked Abraham to follow his rules and be a good example to others.

In return, God promised to give Abraham and his wife Sarah the child they both longed for, and to name their descendants as his Chosen People. God made a covenant with Abraham, promising him numerous descendants, a blessed nation, and the Promised Land in return for their faithfulness to him. Abraham agreed that he and his descendants would obey and worship God and lead by example.

During the era of the patriarchs (Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob), the Israelites referred to God using several descriptive and covenantal names. including El Shaddai (God Almighty), etc. The specific personal name of God, **YHWH** (often pronounced as **Yahweh** or read as **Adonai**), was not fully revealed until the time of Moses.

Abrahamic Migration to Promised Land (Canaan)

Upon direct intervention by God (*Yahweh), possibly as early as around 2092 BCE, Terah, with son Abram, his daughter-in-law Sarah, and grandson Lot, set out from Ur of the Chaldeans to go to the land of Canaan. But when they came to Haran, they settled there, were Terah died and they stayed and mobilised for some 60 years before moving on.

In and around 1843 BCE, Abraham arrives in Canaan. Ishmael is born to Hagar, Abraham's Egyptian slave, and Isaac is born to Sarah in 1858 BCE. Hagar and Ishmael are both cast out, and they wander the desert of Beer-sheba (which is at the edge of southern Judah). Later, they move to the desert of Paran. In time, Ismael became the progenitor of the Arabs.

IN 1818, Isaac married Rebecca, with Jacob and Esau born to them. Isaac becomes the heir of all things that Abraham has, most importantly, of the covenant of God with Abraham). Death of Abraham in 1792

Around 1741, Jacob married sisters Leah and Rachel, and altogether had 12 sons, 8 from the first, Joseph and Benjamin ,the two youngest from Rachel and two each from Bilhah and Zi path, handmaids of his wives. Joseph was born around 1700.

Captivity in Egypt

Joseph was sold into slavery in Egypt around 1683 when he was 17 years old. His facility reunited with him 22 years later around 1671. He had been a slave for 9 years, and was their vizier thereafter. The family settlement in Egypt marked the beginning of the Israelites' multi-generational sojourn there. They stayed in Egypt as slaves. Jacob died in 1658 and Joseph in 1590.

Moses and the Ten Commandments

The Exodus took place around 1445¹⁰. The Israelites spent 40 years in the desert. In the first year, they reached Mount Sinai, where Moses received the Ten Commandments and the instruction for the Tabernacle, and renewed his covenant.

The Israelites grew restless and pressured Aaron into fashioning a molten calf out of gold, which they worshipped. Upon descending, a furious Moses smashed the stone tablets, destroyed the calf, and God disciplined the people.

After the episode of the golden calf, God mercifully renewed the covenant. After Moses interceded on the nation's behalf, God agreed to forgive them. God explicitly declared that He was making a **new covenant** with them renewing their laws and reminding them of their sacred obligations: God instructed Moses to carve two new stone tablets to replace the ones that were broken

Tabernacle and Ark of the Covenant

The Tabernacle was a portable tent-like multiple enclosure of worship, the inner sanctum or “holy of holies” of which was where Yahweh was present. After a period of intercession and forgiveness, the actual building of the Tabernacle took place and it was finally erected on the first day of the second year of Exodus.

The Ark of the Covenant was a sacred, gold-covered wooden chest kept securely inside the innermost sacred room of the Tabernacle. It served as a visible symbol of God's presence and a container for sacred objects, including the stone tablets of the Ten Commandments

40 Years in the Desert

The Israelites' journey continued with a two-year trek to and from Kadesh Barnea, where the people rebelled against God, leading to a decree that the entire adult generation will die in the wilderness. The Israelites wandered in the wilderness and the immediate region of Kadesh-Barnea for about 38 years until that first generation passed away.

Notable events during this period included the rebellion at Korah by a Levite led 250 community leaders against Moses and Aaron, resulting in divine punishment by the earth swallowing them and their tents.

In the 40th year, they arrived at the Plain of Moab near the Jordan River. Moses reiterated the Law (Deuteronomy) and passed away on Mount Nebo .

The Israelites were then led (back) into the Promised Land (Canaan) across the River Jordan by Joshua,, the date disputed, but should have been around 1406¹¹.

The Jewish Bible

The Jewish Bible is called the **Tanakh**, an acronym formed from its three main sections: **Torah** (Teaching/Law), **Nevi'im** (Prophets), and **Ketuvim** (Writings). It contains a total of 24 canonical books.

The Torah (Five Books of Moses)

The Torah, the Five Books of Moses, is considered to be the holiest part, containing the laws given by God to Moses on Mount Sinai, in this context means teaching, instruction or guidance. The most well-known of these laws are the Ten Commandments, but the Torah contains a total of 613 commandments or mitzvah covering many aspects of daily life, including family, personal hygiene and diet. A brief summary of each book (of the Torah)

¹⁰ - An alternative set of dates gives the Exodus as around 1321 BCE, or 125 years later, which puts the crossing of the Jordan at 1281 BCE instead of 1406 BCE, and the total enslavement period 350 years instead of 225.

¹¹ - But see footnote 40.

. **Genesis:** Describes the creation of the cosmos, of Man and Woman, Paradise, the Fall of Man, and the early history of humanity up to Noah; and the stories of the Patriarchs (Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob). It concludes with the story of Joseph and his family relocating to Egypt.

. **Exodus:** Details the enslavement of the Israelites in Egypt, their miraculous liberation under the leadership of Moses, and their departure. It also includes the giving of the Ten Commandments at Mount Sinai, the construction of the Tabernacle and the Ark of the Covenant.

. **Leviticus:** Primarily a collection of laws, rituals, and instructions. It outlines the sacrificial system, dietary laws (kosher), moral behaviour, and the duties of the Levitical priests, emphasizing the theme of holiness.

. **Numbers:** Begins at Mount Sinai and follows the Israelites' 40-year journey through the wilderness toward Canaan. It highlights the trials of the people, the consequences of their rebellion, and the preparations for entering the Promised Land.

. **Deuteronomy:** Composed of Moses' final addresses to the new generation of Israelites before his death. It reviews the journey, restores the laws, renews the covenant with God, and concludes with Moses viewing the Promised Land from Mount Nebo.

The Torah contains very few direct or explicit references to life after death. Its primary focus is heavily placed on the physical world, emphasizing proper behaviour, ethical living, and the rewards of this life rather than abstract future ones.

While a theology of the afterlife developed extensively in later Jewish history, the text of the Torah itself only features a few thematic indications: The Torah mentions in several places that the righteous are "gathered to their people" or their ancestors after death. This implies a post-death continuation where loved ones are reunited. The dead are frequently described as descending to Scheol, which is the bowels of the earth. In these early passages, it is largely portrayed as a place of oblivion rather than a conscious realm of reward or punishment. The concept of the soul's survival is alluded to in verses (from Ecclesiastes) which states, "And the dust returns to the earth as it was, and the spirit returns to God, Who gave it." Explicit mentions of the resurrection of the dead do not appear in the first five books of Moses; they emerge in later prophetic texts, such as Daniel and Isaiah, the prophets through whom Yahweh continued to communicate and intervene throughout their history.

Nevi'im (The Prophets)

This section contains both historical narratives and the orations of the prophets. It is subdivided into the Former and Latter Prophets. The latter include Isaiah, Jeremiah and Ezekiel, plus 12 Minor Prophets..

Ketuvim (The Writings)

This diverse section includes wisdom literature, poetry, theology, and historical records. They include the Poetic & Wisdom books, the five Scrolls (Megillot), including the Song of Songs, Ecclesiastes, and Esther, and the Historical & Remaining Books, including Daniel.

From Joshua to Babylon

This pivotal era in Jewish history spans the conquest of Canaan to the Babylonian Exile. It transitions the Israelites from a loose confederation of tribes into a united monarchy, a divided kingdom, and finally into exile.

. **1400–1200 BCE: The Conquest of Canaan**

Led by Joshua, the Israelites enter the Promised Land, famously capturing Jericho and distributing the land among the Twelve Tribes.

. **1200–1050 BCE: The Era of the Judges**

A period where decentralised tribes are led by regional leaders and chieftains (like Deborah, Gideon, and Samson) during times of crisis.

. **1050 BCE: The United Monarchy Begins**

Facing threats from the Philistines, the tribes unite under King Saul, the first King of Israel.

. 1010–970 BCE: King David's Reign

David unifies the nation, captures Jerusalem from the Jebusites, and establishes it as the religious and political capital.

. 970–931 BCE: King Solomon's Reign

Solomon builds the First Temple in Jerusalem, consolidating national wealth and centralising Jewish worship.

. 931 BCE: The Divided Kingdom

Following Solomon's death, the nation splits. **Northern Kingdom (Israel):** 10 tribes break away, with its capital eventually settling in Samaria. **Southern Kingdom (Judah):** The tribes of Judah and Benjamin remain in the south, retaining Jerusalem as their capital.

. 722 BCE: Fall of the Northern Kingdom

The Assyrian Empire, under Shalmaneser and Sargon II, conquers Israel, exiling the populace (the "Lost Ten Tribes").

. 597 BCE: First Babylonian Exile

Babylonian King Nebuchadnezzar II besieges Jerusalem, exiling King Jehoiachin and the Judean elite to Mesopotamia.

. 587/586 BCE: Destruction of the First Temple

Following a Judean revolt, Nebuchadnezzar destroys Jerusalem and razes the First Temple. A mass deportation marks the beginning of the Babylonian Captivity

The Prophets

Moses was their greatest prophet. Following arrival in the Promised Land, Yahweh maintained a continuous interaction with his Chosen People. Joshua himself worked to divine instructions. The Ark of the Covenant crossed the Jordan at the head of the Israelite armies, and King Saul and King David were appointed with divine involvement. The specifications for the First Temple (Solomon's Temple) were divinely prescribed by Yahweh. God revealed the architectural plans and blueprints to King David through the Spirit.

A "prophet" is someone who speaks on behalf of Yahweh, and someone through whom the latter speaks. The Latter Prophets are a collection of 15 prophetic books. They are categorised by their historical contexts: **Pre-Exilic**, **Exilic**, and **Post-Exilic**, spanning roughly from the 8th to the 5th centuries BCE. They were specially vocal when the Chosen People strayed far from their covenant into idolatry, invoking Yahweh's wrath, as before the Assyrian conquest and the Babylonian exile. They played major roles in extricating the Israelites from the latter, and in rebuilding Jerusalem and the Second Temple.

The four Major Prophets are:

.1. Isaiah. 740–680 BCE Warning against the nation's spiritual blindness and impending judgment by foreign empires (Assyria), intertwined with profound prophecies of comfort, restoration, and the coming of the Messiah (the Suffering Servant)

.2. Jeremiah. 626–580 BCE. Warned Judah of the impending Babylonian exile due to idolatry and corruption. Despite witnessing the fall of Jerusalem, he brought a message of eventual restoration and the promise of a "new covenant". He wrote the book of Lamentations, which mourns the destruction of Jerusalem.

3. Ezekiel. 593–570 BCE. Ministered to the Jewish exiles in Babylon. His message centered on Israel's individual responsibility for sin, the promise of God's presence even in exile, and vivid apocalyptic visions outlining the future restoration of Israel and the rebuilding of the Temple.

4. Daniel. 05–536 BCE. Preached to both Jews and Gentiles during the Babylonian and Persian captivity. Alternates between historical narratives and prophetic, apocalyptic visions emphasising God's absolute sovereignty over all earthly kingdoms and the ultimate triumph of His eternal kingdom

Traditionally, Judaism holds that Yahweh—that is, the god of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob, and the national god of the Israelites—delivered them from slavery in Egypt, and gave them the Law of Moses at Mount Sinai as described in the Torah, and settled them in the Promised Land (Canaan).

The significant feature was that Yahweh made direct contact with Abraham to implement His purposes and intervened at critical moments both directly and through His prophets, throughout their history. As a result, the Israelites had no philosophers or religious speculators to speak of, only leaders in direct communication with Yahweh – and their written record and commentaries, the Jewish Bible.

Messiah

The primary prophet who prophesied a specific Messiah/Prophet was **Moses** himself. He foretold that God would raise up "a prophet like me from among your own brothers."

Following Moses, several subsequent prophets contributed distinct prophecies that further detailed the coming of the Messiah

- . **Isaiah**: Prophesied that the Messiah would be born of a virgin, be a descendant of Jesse and act as a suffering servant who bears the sins of the people.
- . **Micah**: Foretold that the Messiah would be born in Bethlehem
- . **Daniel**: Provided a specific timeline of centuries, culminating in the appearance and subsequent "cutting off" (death) of the Anointed One before the destruction of Jerusalem.
- . **Zechariah**: Prophesied the future coming of a victorious yet humble Messiah and that he would enter Jerusalem humbly, riding on a donkey
- . **Malachi**: Addressed the spiritual apathy, corrupt priesthood, and social sins of the restored community, predicting the arrival of a messenger to prepare for the Lord's coming (ie. John the Baptist)

In addition to these, kings and psalmists like **David** recorded messianic psalms outlining the divine sonship, eternal priesthood, and worldwide dominion of the Messiah.

The Torah is believed to contain foreshadowing of the Messiah through explicit prophecies and symbolic events:

- . **The Seed of the Woman**: God tells the serpent that the offspring of the woman will strike its head, interpreted as the first prophecy of the Messiah's victory over sin and death.
- . **The Blessing of Judah**: The Torah prophesies that the sceptre will not depart from Judah until "Shiloh" (often interpreted as the Messiah) comes.
- . **The Prophet like Moses**: In Moses foretells that God will raise up a prophet like him.
- .- **Typology**: Believers see the Messiah nature foreshadowed in events like the sacrifice of Isaac and the Passover lamb.

Judaism views the concept of the Messiah differently from Christians. According to Jewish tradition, the messianic prophecies—such as bringing about universal peace, gathering all Jewish exiles to the Land of Israel, and rebuilding the Third Temple as core destinies not fulfilled by Jesus Christ.. Furthermore, traditional Judaism does not view the Hebrew Scriptures as pointing to a divine, dying, and resurrecting saviour, but rather views verses used by Christians as either referring to historical figures (like King David) or to the nation of Israel as a whole. They believe in an anointed leader (still to come) who will lead the Chosen People to fulfil Man's destiny by unifying the human race in peace under God

Christians on the other hand believe the Torah and the Jewish Bible contain prophecies and foreshadowing of Jesus as the Messiah, who must and will die to expiate original sin and provide the gateway and way of life for the individual human, originally made in the image of God, to re-gain his eternal abode.

What the Judaism Believes

Ten Commandments

- “Thou shall have no other gods before me”
- “Thou shalt not make unto thee any graven image.” ...
- “Thou shalt not take the name of the Lord thy God in vain.”
- “Remember the sabbath day, to keep it holy.” .
- “Honour thy father and thy mother.” ...
- “Thou shalt not kill.” ...
- “Thou shalt not commit adultery.” ...
- “Thou shalt not steal.”
- Thou shall not bear false witness again they neighbour
- Thou shall not covert thy neighbour’s wife
- Thou shall not covert thy neighbour’s goods.

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Christianity

Table 3A.3
Christian Time-line

4 BCE	Birth of Jesus Christ
30 CE	Crucifixion, Death, Resurrection, and Ascension
75-100 CE	New Testament – The Christian Bible

Jesus Christ, Son of God

In the wider Abrahamic tradition, Jesus is regarded as another prophet. Christians however believe that Jesus Christ was and is the Son of God.

Christians believe he was incarnated and became Man to die in expiation of Original Sin and open the doors of heaven for man’s return to eternal life with the Father. He effectively achieved this when he conquered death by his Resurrection three days after his death, whereon His Mercy began to flow to mankind.

His life and “the way” he taught are captured in the four Gospels, by Mark, Mathew, Luke and John¹². He said he came to fulfil the scriptures (the Jewish Old Testament) not destroy it. The latter therefore form part of the Christian’s beliefs.

He revealed many new truths. There are Three Persons in One God, the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit. and God welcomed repentant sinners. Among his most famous sayings is: “A new commandment I give you, that you love one another as I love you.”

The question is asked: did Jesus say he was God? To do so in the Jewish society of the time would have been the ultimate blasphemy, and court immediate death by stoning. But when he was asked, he was as clear as could be when he said, “Very truly I tell you,” Jesus answered, “before Abraham was born, I am!”.

¹² - The foundation and initial expansion of the Christian religion and church is captured in the Acts of the Apostles by Luke and the Letters (mainly) of St Paul, forming part of the New Testament.

Commentators explain that the name of God as revealed to Moses is YHWH (Yahweh), which is spoken as "I Am That I Am". Jesus used the form of self-address "I am" many times, leaving no doubt of his divine authority and salvic mission, both in metaphoric contexts and in direct response to the question.

- . **"I am the bread of life"** Spoken to the crowds in Capernaum after he miraculously fed the 5,000.
- . **"I am the light of the world"** Declared in the Temple treasury during the Feast of Tabernacles.
- . **"I am the door (or gate) of the sheep"** Preached to a crowd of Pharisees while explaining the parable of the sheepfold.
- . **"I am the good shepherd"** Spoken during the same discourse,
- . **"I am the resurrection and the life"** Spoken to Martha in Bethany before he raised her brother Lazarus from the dead.
- . **"I am the way, the truth, and the life"** Told to Thomas and the disciples in the Upper Room during the Last Supper.
- . **"I am the true vine"** Shared with his disciples on the way to Gethsemane to illustrate their connection to him.

In these following instances, Jesus uses "I am" without a descriptive predicate. Commentators explain that In the original Greek text, these explicitly mirror the sacred name of God as revealed to Moses

- . **To the Samaritan Woman** When she says the Messiah is coming, Jesus responds, "I who speak to you am He"
- . **Debating the Pharisees** In a heated debate about his identity, Jesus states, "Before Abraham was, I am."
- . **At His Trial Before the Sanhedrin** When the High Priest demands to know if he is the Christ, Jesus explicitly answers, "I am."
- . **During His Arrest in Gethsemane** When the armed mob states they are looking for Jesus of Nazareth, he responds, "I am He." The power of the statement causes the soldiers to fall backwards to the ground.

At His Trial before Pontius Pilate, when asked "Are you King of the Jews?" he replied "My kingship is not of this world; if my kingship were of this world, my servants would fight, that I might not be handed over to the Jews; but my kingship is not from the world" Pilate said to him, "So you are a king?" Jesus answered, "You say that I am a king. For this I was born, and for this I have come into the world, to bear witness to the truth."

You could say his whole life was an attestation of his Father, as per these quotes:

- . "As a twelve-year-old in the Temple, Jesus asks His parents, "Why were you searching for me? Didn't you know I had to be in my Father's house?"
- . "Not everyone who says to me, 'Lord, Lord,' will enter the kingdom of heaven, but only the one who does the will of my Father who is in heaven."
- . "Whoever acknowledges me before others, I will also acknowledge before my Father in heaven.
- . "All things have been committed to me by my Father."
- . "The Father and I are one".
- . "If you knew me, you would know my Father also."
- . "My Father's house has many rooms. "
- . "On that day you will realise that I am in my Father, and you are in me, and I am in you."

Jesus revealed additional sides of his godhead on other occasions" -

- During the Parable of the Goats and the Sheep: "When the Son of Man comes in his glory, and all the angels with him, he will sit on his glorious throne. All the nations will be gathered before him, and he will separate the people one from another as a shepherd separates the sheep from the goats."

.- When he said to Martha before raising Lazarus from the dead: "I am the Resurrection and the life. He who believes in me, although he be dead, shall live, and everyone who lives and believes in me, shall not die forever."

In his case, Jesus backed his claims by many acts of supernatural power. He left the Jews in no doubt who he was, so much so that they wanted him put to death. Only God could have reversed evolution and resurrected himself (or anyone else eg. Lazarus) from death.

Jesus Christ instituted the Eucharist, giving to mankind down the generations his own Body and Blood, by transubstantiation of bread and wine, as their spiritual food. He likewise instituted the Christian community as the Mystical Body of Christ through which He dispensed and they earned and shared his Infinite Mercy. The Virgin Mary, through whom He was incarnate, continues in the role of the Mediatrix of all Graces.

What the Christians Believe¹³

I believe in God, the Father Almighty,
Creator of Heaven and earth;
and in Jesus Christ, His only Son Our Lord,
Who was conceived by the Holy Spirit,
born of the Virgin Mary,
suffered under Pontius Pilate,
was crucified, died, and was buried.

He descended into Hell.
the third day He rose again from the dead.
He ascended into Heaven,
and sitteth at the right hand of God, the Father Almighty.

From thence
He shall come to judge the living and the dead.

I believe in the Holy Spirit,
the holy Catholic Church,
the communion of saints,
the forgiveness of sins,
the resurrection of the body
and life everlasting.
Amen.

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Islam

Table 3A.4
Islamic Time-line

570-632 CE	Mohammad, born in Mecca
622-632 CE	Delivery of the Quran
622 CE	Flight to Medina. The Hijrah begins
637 CE	Death of Mohammad, Tomb in Medina
	Isra, Mohammad's Night Journey to Jerusalem
661-670 CE	Umayyad, Caliphate
750=1258 CE	Abbasid Caliphate. Golden Age of Islam (Persia)
929-1031 CE	Caliphate of Cordoba
1258-1323 CE	Ottoman empire
1453 CE	Fall of Constantinople

¹³ - <https://www.gotquestions.org/faith.html>

An Abrahamic Religion

Islam is an Abrahamic monotheistic religion centered on the belief in one God (Allah). The Quran is the central holy scripture of Islam. Adherents of Islam are called Muslims.

Islam shares beliefs with Judaism and Christianity by tracing its history back to the patriarch Abraham, and ultimately to the first prophet, Adam. All the prophets preached the same universal message of belief in one God and kindness to humanity.

Quran

Islam is the religion of the Muslims. The Quran is believed by Muslims to be a Revelation directly from God (Allah). The Quran was orally revealed by God to the final Islamic prophet Muhammad through the angel Gabriel incrementally over a period of some 23 years, beginning on the Night of Power, when Muhammad was 40, and concluding in 632, the year of his death.

Muslims regard the Quran as the culmination of a series of divine messages starting with those revealed to the first Islamic prophet Adam, including the Islamic holy books of the Torah, Psalms, and the Gospel. Muslims believe Muhammad to be the final prophet, and the Quran to be the final revelation. Muslims believe in angels who are messengers of God. Muslims believe Jesus Christ was a prophet.

Supplementing the Quran with explanations for some cryptic Quranic narratives, and rulings that also provide the basis for Islamic law in most denominations of Islam, are hadiths, oral and written traditions believed to describe words and actions of Muhammad.

What Muslims Believe

The central theme of the Quran is monotheism. God is depicted as living, eternal, omniscient and omnipotent. He is the creator of everything, of the heavens and the earth and what is between them. All human beings are equal in their utter dependence upon God, and their well-being depends upon their acknowledging that fact and living accordingly.

The doctrine of the last day and eschatology (the final fate of the universe) may be considered the second great doctrine of the Quran. It is estimated that approximately one-third of the Quran is eschatological, dealing with the afterlife in the next world and with the day of judgment at the end of time.

The Quran does not assert a natural immortality of the human soul, since man's existence is dependent on the will of God: when he wills, he causes man to die; and when he wills, he raises him to life again in a bodily resurrection.

The Garden of Eden is the garden promised to believers after death. In the Quran belief in the afterlife is often referred in conjunction with belief in God: "Believe in God and the last day" emphasising what is considered impossible is easy in the sight of God. A number of suras are directly related to the afterlife and warn people to be prepared for the "imminent" day referred to in various ways.

But the outcome for the disbelievers is the Fire. Islam rejects the concept of original sin and Muslims believe that all human beings are born pure children automatically.

Core Beliefs of Islam

The core beliefs of Islam are derived from the Qur'an, and have also been elaborated upon by Prophet Muhammad. They are based on various aspects of what is commonly described as the *Unseen* – all that is beyond human sensory power and thus hidden from human eye. These beliefs are as follows.

Belief in Allah

There is only one God, referred to as Allah in Arabic. He is the only Deity worthy of worship and unconditional obedience. Allah is the creator of the universe, and has complete authority over all that exists.

While Allah has given humanity the choice whether to obey Him or not in this life, other creations and objects such as the animals, plants, mountains, oceans, and planets, are all in submission to the will of Allah.

He is thus the sole master of the heavens and the earth, and He alone sustains all His creation. Allah has no associate – no parents or children or predecessors or successors. He is the Supreme Being, accountable to none. He has always been, and always will be.

Belief in Angels

The angels are a creation of Allah hidden from human perception. They were created from light, long before the creation of humanity. The angels are obedient to Allah, and carry out His commands – they do not act independently of Him. One of the angels, Jibril (Gabriel), was responsible for bringing Allah's revelations to His prophets, while other angels have other tasks to perform in His kingdom.

The angels have also appeared in human form in the past at Allah's command to communicate with His chosen servants. For example, the Qur'an states that Jibril (Gabriel) appeared in human guise to give the tiding of a son to Maryam (Mary), as a special honour from Allah.

Belief in Prophets

A prophet is a person chosen by Allah to receive His words of guidance and then to communicate these words to his people. The prophets were sometimes granted miracles as proof of their being divinely inspired. They all prescribed a strict code of monotheism -urging people to serve the only God, and associate none with Him.

All prophets were sincere to their people, always spoke truthfully, lived with humility, led others by example, and often sought to establish or maintain a system of justice and peace. Muhammad was the last prophet appointed by Allah – described in the Qur'an as the “seal of the prophets”.

Hence, there shall be no prophet after him. Although some prophets were favoured by Allah above others, Muslims are required to respect them all and not to discriminate between any of them, as the Qur'an states:

“Say: We believe in Allah and that which is revealed to us and that which was revealed to Ibrahim [Abraham] and Ismail [Ishmael] and Ishaq [Isaac] and Yaqub [Jacob] and the tribes, and that which was vouchsafed to Musa [Moses] and Isa [Jesus] and the [other] prophets from their Lord. We make no distinction between any of them, and to Him we have surrendered.” (Aal Imran 3:84)

Belief in Revealed Books

The elaborate guidelines granted by Allah to prophets were written down and recorded in the form of “Books” or “Scriptures”. The divine Books catered to the specific needs of their respective peoples, and thus differed in content and style. However, they all conveyed the same basic message of monotheism, and emphasized being obedient to Allah and doing good to others.

The Qur'an confirms the divine origin of the Torah, Gospel, and Psalms. It also makes mention of the Scripture granted to Ibrahim (Abraham), and declares the Qur'an to be the concluding word of God, with its message being universal. While the previously revealed Books were tampered with or not

timely recorded, thus lacking in authenticity, the Qur'an contains the exclusive word of God, without any additions to, or deletions from, its original content, over the passage of time.

Belief in the Hereafter

This world shall come to an end – just as it was created by Allah in the first place. All life on earth shall cease to exist and all its landmarks will be flattened by the calamities of the Last Day. Then Allah shall resurrect all those who ever lived, and people will be called to give an account of all their deeds in this life.

The judgement shall then be pronounced, and people will be rewarded or punished according to their actions: those who associated none with Allah and lived righteously shall be in the gardens of Paradise, while those who did otherwise will be punished by Him in the fire of Hell. This afterlife will be eternal, and people shall be dealt with in perfect justice, taking into account their specific circumstances in this life.

Belief in Predestination

This is the belief that whatever occurs is by the decree of Allah and in accordance with His will. Allah is aware of all that takes place in the universe, and nothing escapes His all-encompassing knowledge. Thus, all happenings and incidents in the life of a person are already known to Allah and comply with His will.

Delivery of the Quran

. Muhammad was born in Mecca, Saudi Arabia around 570 CE. He worked first as a shepherd and then as a merchant. He was not happy with the people around him because of superstitions and social and economic injustice. The people were worshipping many gods and had forgotten the message of prophet Abraham to worship one God. Muhammad loved to pray and meditate in the mountains. On one of those occasions, in the year 610 CE, when he was about 40 years old, he received a revelation from God through the angel Jibril (Gabriel). He continued to receive messages from God throughout his life and he began preaching to others what he had learned. His main message is that there was no other God but Allah and that people should lead their lives in a way that was pleasing to Allah.

The Five Pillars of Islam

- . **(1) Shahada (Declaration of Faith):** "There is no god but God, and Muhammad is the Messenger of God".
- . **(2).Salat (Prayer):** Muslims are required to pray five times a day, facing the direction of the Kaaba in Mecca.
- . **(3) Zakat (Charity):** Muslims are obliged to give a portion of their wealth to the needy.
- . **(4) Sawm (Fasting):** Muslims fast during the month of Ramadan, from dawn to sunset.
- . **(5) Hajj (Pilgrimage):** If they are able, Muslims are expected to make a pilgrimage to Mecca at least once in their lifetime.

Branches of Islam:

. (1) Sunni Islam:

The largest branch of Islam, following the traditions of the Prophet Muhammad and the first four caliphs.

. (2) Shia Islam:

A smaller branch of Islam that believes that Ali, the Prophet's cousin and son-in-law, should have been the first caliph.

. (3) Ibadi Islam:

A smaller branch that emerged in the 8th century and is primarily found in Oman and other parts of the Middle East.

The Arabic word "Islam" means "submission" or "surrender to the will of God". The faithful are called "Muslims," derived from the word "Islam" and meaning "one who surrenders to God's will".

Muslim population

Islam spread quickly first throughout Arabia and surrounding countries and then throughout the world. There are 1.2 billion Muslims in the world with 7 million in the United States. Only about 18% of Muslims are Arabs and live in the Middle East. The countries with the largest Muslim populations are Indonesia and India.

There are two basic groups of Islam: the Sunnis (about 80% of the world's Muslims) and the Shi'ites (about 20% of the world's Muslims). Although they share the same basic beliefs, they disagree on who was the rightful leader of Islam after Muhammad's death.

Islam and Evolution

Muslim thinkers have proposed and accepted elements of the theory of evolution, some holding the belief of the supremacy of God in the process. Some scholars suggested that both narratives of creation and of evolution, as understood by modern science, may be believed by modern Muslims as addressing two different kinds of truth, the revealed and the empirical. Others argue that faith and science can be integrated and complement each other.

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The Babism–Bahai' Tradition

The Bab

The Báb, born 'Alí Muhammad Shirazi (1819 -1860), was an Iranian religious leader who founded Babism, took the title of the Bab (meaning "gate").and is also one of the central figures of the Bahai' Faith.

Table 3A.5
Babism-Bahai' Time-line

1819-1860	The Bab (born Ali Mohammad)
1844-1850	Proclaimed Babism
1850	Drew up the Bayan (text). Executed for apostacy.
1850	Appointed Bahá'u'lláh to succeed him
1850	Aged 31, the Bab was executed for apostacy by Ottoman empire
1909-1953 CE	Shrine of the Bab is at the Bahá'í World Centre, on the slopes of Mt Carmel, at Haifa, Israel.

Babism was a monotheistic religion that was founded in 1844 out of Shaykhism, a Shia Islamic religious movement.

The Bab was born Ali Mohammad 1819 CE. He was a merchant from Shiraz, in Quajar, Iran, who, in 1844 at the age of 25, began the Bábi Faith. In the next six years, the Báb composed numerous letters and books in which he abrogated Islamic law and traditions, establishing a new religion and introducing a new social order focused on unity, love, and service to others. He encouraged the learning of arts and sciences, modernising education and improving the status of women.

The Báb progressively revealed his claim in his extensive writings to be a Manifestation of God, of a status as great as Moses, Jesus, and Muhammad, receiving revelations as profound as the Torah, Gospel and the Quran. This new revelation, he claimed, would release the creative energies and capacities necessary for the establishment of global unity and peace. He referred to himself by the traditional Muslim title "Báb" (meaning the gate).

The Bab stirred Iran with his claim to not only be the promised redeemer of Islam, (the Qa'im or Mahdi) but a new prophet, his title indicating his position as a spiritual "gate to divine knowledge", and to a still greater God-sent educator whose imminent appearance he was preparing the way for.

He proclaimed that the central purpose of his mission was to prepare for the coming of a spiritual luminary greater than himself – the promised one of the world's great religions; he referred to this promised deliverer as “he whom God will make manifest”

He introduced the concept of progressive revelation, highlighting the continuity and renewal of religion. He also emphasised ethics, independent investigation of truth, and human nobility. Additionally, he provided prescriptions to regulate marriage, divorce, and inheritance, and set forth rules for a future Babi society, although these were never implemented.

The Báb was popular among the lower classes, the poor and the urban merchants, artisans and some villagers

However, he faced opposition from the orthodox Islamic clergy and the government, which eventually executed him and thousands of his followers, who were known as Babists

What Babists Believe

The Bab claimed authentic revelation from God along with the revelations of the other world religions, Islam being a stage within the divine process of progressive revelation.

Topics in his works are extensive and cover material, social, moral, and spiritual principles relevant to human life, both for individuals and groups. Categories include commentary on scriptures, prophecies, and beliefs of former religions; abrogation of past laws, and enunciation of laws and ordinances for this new dispensation; mystical writings; claimed proofs and explanations about God; statements relating to God's creation of human souls as noble entities capable of knowing the Creator exists and able to reflect all Its virtues; claimed proofs of life after death and descriptions of how souls progress for eternity in endless divine realms; exaltation of work performed in a spirit of service to the status of worship; explications on just governance and on creating unity and world order; expositions on knowledge, philosophy, alchemy, medicine and healthy living; spiritual principles underlying social teachings; calls for universal education; and living virtuously and in harmony with God's Will.

The Bahá'í Faith

Table 3A.6
Bahai' Time-line

1817	Bahá'u'lláh (Born Mírzá Husayn-'Alí Nuri)
1844/1860	Proclaimed Babism
1852	Took title of Bahá'u'lláh
1860	Bab appointed Bahá'u'lláh to succeed him in Babism
1868-1892	Bahá'u'lláh imprisoned by Ottoman empire in Edine and Acre where he died by natural causes.
1892 CE	Bahá'u'lláh founded Bahá'u'lláh Faith by the Book of the Covenant. Named his eldest son 'Abdu'l Baha his successor, Accepted the whole of the Bab message.

The Bahá'í Faith has three central figures: (1) the Bab (1819–1850), executed for heresy, who taught that a prophet similar to Jesus and Muhammad would soon appear; (2) Baha'u'llah; (1817–1892), who claimed to be said prophet in 1863 and who had to endure both exile and imprisonment; and (3) his son, Abdul Baha (1844–1921), who made teaching trips to Europe and the United States after his release from confinement in 1908. After Abdul ' Baha's death in 1921, the leadership of the religion fell to his grandson.

Bahá'ís annually elect local, regional, and national spiritual Assemblies, that govern the religion's affairs, and every five years an election is held for the Universal House of Justice, the governing institution of the worldwide Bahá'í community that is located in Haifa, Israel, at the Shrine of the Bab, near where the Shrine of Baha'u'llah is also located, at Acre.

Bahá'u'lláh

Mirza Husayn-'Alí was an Iranian religious leader who founded the Bahai Faith. He was born to an aristocratic family (1817–1892) and was exiled due to his adherence to messianic Babism.

In 1863, he first announced his claim to a revelation from God and spent the rest of his life in further imprisonment in the Ottoman empire. His teachings revolved around the principles of unity and religious renewal, ranging from moral and spiritual progress to world governance.

At the age of 27 (1844) he accepted the claim of the Bab (in fact on its announcement) and became one of the most outspoken supporters of the new religious movement which advocated, among other things, **abrogation of Islamic law**, which attracted heavy opposition.

Tensions grew between him and the appointed leader of the Bábís, who did not recognise Baha'u'llah's claim. Throughout the rest of his life Bahá'u'lláh gained the allegiance of almost all of the Bábís, who came to be known as Bahá'ís, while a remnant of Bábís became known as Azalis and are regarded by Bahá'ís as equivalent to apostates.

At the age of 33 (1850), he was banished from Iran. Just before leaving, while imprisoned in the Shyah-Chai dungeon, Bahá'u'lláh claimed to receive revelations from God marking the beginning of his divine mission.

After settling in Iraq, Bahá'u'lláh again attracted the ire of Iranian authorities, and they requested that the Ottoman government move him farther away. He was sent to Constantinople (Istanbul), where however he spent less than four months.

In 1863, at the time of his removal from Baghdad, Bahá'u'lláh first announced his claim of prophethood to his family and followers, which he said came to him years earlier in prison. (The Bab meanwhile had been executed as an apostate in 1860.)

After receiving chastising letters from Bahá'u'lláh, Ottoman authorities turned against him and put him under house arrest in Adrianople (Edirne) where he remained for four years, until a royal decree of 1868 banished all Bábís to either Cyprus or Akka (Acre).

After two years of harsh confinement in the prison-city of Acre, his restrictions were gradually eased until his final years were spent in relative freedom in the area surrounding Acre. He was allowed to live in a home while still officially a prisoner of that cit. He died there in 1892.

Bahá'u'lláh wrote at least 1,500 letters, some book-length. Some teachings are mystical and address the nature of God and the progress of the soul, while others address the needs of society, the religious obligations of his followers, or the structure of Bahá'í institutions. He viewed humans as fundamentally spiritual beings and called upon individuals to develop divine virtues and further the material and spiritual advancement of society.

Abbás Effendi was Baha'u'llah's eldest son, who chose for himself the title of Abdu'l-Bahá ("Servant of Bahá"). His father left a will that appointed the leader of the Bahá'í community, empowering him as the sole authorised interpreter of his writings.

Abdu'l-Bahá had shared his father's long exile and imprisonment, which continued until his own release, which came about as a result of the Young Turk Revolution in 1908.

Following his release, he led a life of travelling, speaking, teaching, and maintaining correspondence with communities of believers and individuals, expounding the principles of the Bahá'í Faith. Bahá'ís consider Abdu'l-Bahá to be a perfect exemplar of the Bahá'í teachings.

What Baha'is Believe

The Bahá'u'lláh (Baha'i) concept of God is monotheistic. God is a single uncreated imperishable entity that is the absolute and ultimate source of all existence.

Bahá'u'lláh teaches "the existence and oneness of a personal God, unknowable, inaccessible, the source of all Revelation, eternal, omniscient, omnipresent, and almighty.

The Creator cannot be grasped by creation—for anything made can never comprehend its maker. Nevertheless, the Creator has bestowed upon humans the capacity to recognize the maker's existence, and the ability to develop spiritually through awareness of God's infinite superlative attributes and by striving to emulate those qualities as best as one can in life-virtues such as love, mercy, kindness, generosity, justice, etc.

Human knowledge of God's existence and awareness of the Creator's attributes will forever be only possible to the extent that these are shared by special Beings described as Manifestations of God.

Manifestations are spiritual entities sent by God to a particular period and place as an instrument of divine intervention. Manifestations reflect the light of God's Will and Purpose in this world.

The "inseparable" nature and unity of the twin revelations of the Báb and Bahá'u'lláh are why Bahá'ís consider both faiths as forming one complete religious entity, and the reason the 1844 declaration of the Báb is considered the starting date of the Bahá'í Faith.

The followers of Bahá'u'lláh are called "Baha'is". He created an explicit Covenant with Bahá'ís in his will and testament known as the Book of the Covenant. It was unsealed and read before witnesses and members of his family on the ninth day after his death in 1892.

Bahá'u'lláh, the Prophet-Founder of the Bahá'í Faith, testified to the validity of the Quran, writing, "for this Book is verily the Straight Path. This is the Way of God unto all who are in the heavens and all who are on the earth."

Bahá'ís perceive each major world religion as part of one God-ordained holistic educational process which has spiritually and socially enabled human civilisation itself to progress—as people have learned to embrace ever-widening circles of unity which have successively involved ever more diverse families, tribes, city-states, and then nations. Inevitably, the human race must, and will, embrace its final circle of unity, that of the planet itself.

In announcing his claim to be the promised manifestation heralded by the Báb, Bahá'u'lláh also declared his station as the Promised One prophesied in every major religion of the past—the divine teacher God vowed to send to usher in humanity's Golden Age.

This understanding is based upon Bahá'u'lláh's teachings regarding the essential oneness of religion. Thus, Bahá'u'lláh is seen as fulfilling prophecies of Jewish, Christian, Islamic, Zoroastrian, Hindu, and Buddhist scriptures

Bahá'u'lláh calls upon every Bahá'í to live a righteous, healthy, productive life, characterised by good manners and moral virtues such as truthfulness, integrity, trustworthiness, patience, courtesy, hospitality, fidelity, purity, chastity, moderation, forbearance, justice and fairness. He encourages believers to associate with those of all faiths in a friendly and loving manner, condemns and forbids all forms of religious violence, including jihad.

To promote the development of a united world community, Baha'u'llah emphasises the importance of eliminating religious and racial prejudices and avoiding extreme nationalism. Further, he stipulates the rights of all minorities must be safeguarded and their development nurtured. A condition described as absolutely necessary for the realisation of global peace is complete equality between women and men worldwide.

Bahai Faith and Creation

The Baha'i Faith does not adhere to traditional creation myths or legends. It views the universe as infinite and eternal, with creation being an ongoing process guided by God's will. The Baha'i teachings emphasize that the universe, including the physical world and the spiritual realms, has no beginning or end.

The Baha'i Faith does not interpret stories like Adam and Eve as literal historical events. Instead, these narratives are seen as symbolic representations of spiritual truths.

God creates through the Primal Will, which is seen as an instrument or intermediary in the creative process. Creation is a gradual process, with different stages of development and evolution.

Humanity is seen as a part of God's creation and is tasked with knowing and serving God. Baha'is believe that God has sent a series of divine messengers or Manifestations throughout history, each bringing guidance for a particular time and place. These include figures like Abraham, Moses, Krishna, Buddha, Jesus, Muhammad, the Bab, and Baha'u'llah.

The religion has 5–8 million adherents (known as Bahá'ís) spread throughout most of the world's countries and territories.

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Chapter Four

The Indian Cultural Heritage

The Dharmatic Religious Tradition

"Dharmic religions" refers to a grouping of religions originating in the Indian subcontinent, primarily Hinduism, Buddhism, Jainism, and Sikhism. These religions share a common foundation in the concept of dharma, which generally signifies righteousness, duty, or the natural order of things. While the specific interpretations of dharma vary across these religions, it remains a central principle guiding their practices and beliefs. Here's a breakdown of the key aspects:

Dharma:

In Sanskrit, "dharma" means "that which sustains" or "the way things are." It encompasses concepts like righteousness, law, duty, and the natural order of the universe.

Hinduism:

Dharma in Hinduism is a complex concept, often linked to the cosmic order (Rta) and individual duties based on one's stage of life and social position.

Buddhism:

Dharma in Buddhism refers to the teachings of the Buddha and the ultimate truth about reality. It is one of the Three Jewels (Buddha, Dharma, Sangha).

Jainism:

Dharma in Jainism emphasises the path of righteousness, moral transformation, and the teachings of the Tirthankaras.

Sikhism:

In Sikhism, dharma signifies the path of righteousness, proper religious practices, and fulfilling one's moral duties.

The term "Dharmic religions" is used to highlight these shared roots and the central role of dharma in these traditions.

Pre-Historical Background (3300 – 1500 BCE)

For much of human history the Indian sub-continent has been one, and only became separated as India and Pakistan in 1947, while the latter split into Bangladesh in 1971¹⁴. It was fortuitous that the original separation was by religion, ie the Muslims from Hindus (those of the Dharmatic religions) so that when we narrow down into looking at the latter, we find ourselves looking primarily at present day India.

As much of their common history underlies our subject of study, I found it meaningful to review its major components as a continuous whole.

¹⁴ For the record, Sri Lanka became independent in 1948, Bhutan was confirmed independent earlier in 1947 and Nepal had been independent since 1923.

Indus Valley Civilisation

Incredibly, the Indus Valley Civilisation (3300 – 1700 BCE): was first only discovered in 1921. Much still remains unknown. Fundamentally,, their language script has not yet been deciphered, so most of what is the known is archaeological.

One of the six “cradles of civilisations”, the Indus Valley Civilisation (IVC) is believed mainly to have developed from scratch in situ, by its indigenous people. They went from hunters and gatherers, to a settled agriculture society, and to becoming a highly urbanised culture with advanced infrastructure and trade. Present day scholarship admits the possibility the indigenous peoples did themselves migrate from the Iranian plateau earlier

The IVC is not seen as a result of a large-scale migration from a single place, but rather as a gradual development from smaller, localised communities. Modern research emphasises indigenous development.

The Indus Valley Civilisation, also known as the Harappan Civilisation, originated in the northwestern region of the Indian subcontinent, in modern day Pakistan.

The civilisation spanned a vast area, including parts of modern-day northwest India, but mainly encompassing the Indus river valley and its tributaries

in the Neolithic (8000 – 4,000 BCE) they discovered the wheel, and agriculture became more widespread. The IVC belonged to the Bronze age (4,000 – 1500 BCE), with the use of copper and other metals alongside stone tools

The Indus Valley Civilisation was contemporary with other great ancient civilisations like Mesopotamia and Egypt.

The earliest evidence of settlements have found in Mehrgarh, in the foothills of the province of Baluchistan, west of the mid-reaches of the Indus, dating back to around 7000 BCE.

The Early Harappan phase of the Indus Valley Civilization is generally dated from 3300 BCE to 2600 BCE. It was characterised by the development of early urban settlements and the establishment of trade networks.

The Mature phase flourished between 2600 BCE and 1900 BCE and reached its peak with major urban centres like Harappa and Mohenjo-daro. Geographically it spread from the present-day Punjab to Afghanistan.

The Late Phase (1900 – 1500 BCE) marked the civilisation's decline. Early in the second millennium BCE, persistent drought caused the population of the Indus Valley to scatter from large urban centres to villages. The other reasons are still debated, but are believed to include shifting river patterns, and potential invasions, all which contributed to its eventual end.

Urbanisation

The first urbanisation was under the mercantile Harappans in the north-western part of India from 2500 to 1900 BCE. It was spread over a large geography, larger than any of the other contemporaneous ones in Egypt, China, and Mesopotamia.

The cities were meticulously planned with a grid layout, featuring wide, intersecting streets with separate entry and exit to control movement. Buildings were built using standardized bricks in 1:2:4 ratio, suggesting a centralized system of production and distribution.

The cities boasted sophisticated drainage systems, including underground pipes and covered drains, to prevent flooding and maintain sanitation. Wells and reservoirs were used to supply water to the city's inhabitants. Large granaries and warehouses were found, indicating a well-organised system of food storage and distribution.

Mohenjo-Daro featured a large, rectangular structure known as the Great Bath, possibly used for ritual cleansing or bathing. Harappa had a large, rectangular building that may have served as an assembly hall or meeting place.

The cities were involved in extensive trade, with evidence of long-distance trade networks. Dholavira and Lothal were both significant centres of maritime trade. The Indus Valley people were skilled artisans, producing a variety of artifacts, including pottery, seals, and jewellery.

Pre-Hindu practices

Some scholars suggest that certain aspects of later Hindu practices, like the worship of a mother goddess and a male deity (possibly a precursor to Shiva), may have originated in the Indus Valley Civilisation. .

The Great Bath at Mohenjo-daro suggests a focus on ritual bathing and purification, which may have been related to religious practices, including those associated with death and the afterlife.

While there's no definitive evidence of formal ancestor worship in the Late Harappan period, some practices like the inclusion of grave goods with burials suggest a belief in the afterlife and perhaps a connection to deceased ancestors. The Late Harappan period saw regional variations in burial practices, including extended inhumations and post-cremation pot-burials.

Adivasis, as their name reflects, are the earliest inhabitants of the subcontinent and once inhabited much larger areas than they do at present.

The Indus Valley Civilisation is known to have used a written script, referred to as the Indus script, which first appeared around 3300-3200 BCE during the Early Harappan period. It continued to be used through the Mature Harappan period (2600-1900 BCE). While the script remains undeciphered, its earliest examples are found on pottery and clay impressions of seals.

Indigenous People

As with everywhere else, the Indian subcontinent would have been populated by arriving hunters and gatherers, at various stages of societal development. These constitute the indigenous people. Over time, they tend to have been pushed to the territorial fringes by invading peoples or by the more advanced communities among themselves.

The indigenous peoples of India comprise diverse groups. They are officially designated as "Scheduled Tribes" by the Indian government and constitute a significant portion of the population, estimated at 8.6%. The term "Adivasi" is widely used to refer to them and encompasses over 200 distinct peoples speaking more than 100 languages.

Today, they are widespread, with concentrations across the foothills of the South, the Deccan and the Himalayas.

In the past, the larger Adivasi groups were able to sustain their own kingdoms in central India. The Rajas of Garha-Mandla and Chanda are examples of an Adivasi aristocracy that ruled in this region, and were not only the hereditary leaders of their Gond subjects, but also held sway over substantial communities of non-tribals who recognised them as their feudal lords. The most backward communities are those in the Nicobar and Andaman Islands.

One interesting point is that the Adivasi are outside the caste system.

Migration of the Dravidians

Dravidian peoples are believed to have migrated to India from the Horn of Africa and/or the Iranian plateau dating back at least 4,500 years. The evidence suggests a presence in the Indus valley and south India, the sequence between the latter two not being clear for the present.

The Indus Valley Civilisation is believed to have had a significant Dravidian component, possibly even of Dravidian origin.

Some theories propose an early migration predating the Indus Valley Civilisation, while others suggest a later migration coinciding with the decline of the Indus Valley Civilisation

The Dravidian people today primarily inhabit Southern India and Sri Lanka. Archaeological, linguistic, and genetic studies suggest a connection between Dravidian speakers and Neolithic farmers from the Zagros region of Iran. It is generally believed they migrated from West Asia, specifically the Zagros Mountains region of Iran, to the Indus Valley around 8,000 years ago. These early migrants, likely farmers, mixed with indigenous hunter-gatherers, forming the basis of the Dravidian population.

Around 1500 BCE, changes in the Indus River patterns, possibly due to climate change, led to the decline of the IVC, and people migrated south and east, contributing to the spread of Dravidian populations and languages.

Prior to the widespread adoption of Hinduism, Dravidian peoples practiced a form of folk religion characterised by animism, ancestor worship, and a focus on nature deities. This indigenous religion included the worship of mother goddesses, like Mariamman, and the veneration of ancestors through rituals and memorial stones. Elements of this pre-Hindu religion persist in some areas of South India, often merging with later Hindu practices. They have been detected in the practices of the Indus Valley Civilisation.

Migration Of Indo Aryans

Pro Indo Aryans

The Yamnaya culture, originating from the Pontic-Caspian steppe, significantly expanded during the Bronze Age, impacting populations across Eurasia. This expansion, starting around 3000 BCE, is linked to the spread of Indo-European languages and is evident in the genetic makeup of modern populations from Europe to South Asia.

The Kurgan Hypothesis, the most widely accepted scenario of Indo-European origins, postulates that people of a so-called Kurgan Culture, a grouping of the Yamna or Pit Grave culture and its predecessors, of the Pontic Steppe were the originators of the Proto-Indo-European language.

The people of the Yamnaya culture were essentially in the Bronze age. They lived primarily as nomads, with a chiefdom system and had wheeled carts, wagons that allowed them to manage large herds. The economy included animal husbandry, fishing and foraging, and the manufacture of ceramics, tools and weapons.

Around four thousand years ago, the Indus Valley Civilisation was in decline, and a new people, the Indo Aryans, moved in. Historians accept that this migration took place as a slow continuous transition in waves from 1500 – 500 BCE. They came on into the Gangetic plain.

The Indo Aryans brought their Vedic religion and the Sanskrit language to the subcontinent and these profoundly influenced Hinduism and subcontinental Indian culture thereafter.

The Indo-Aryans migrated through the adjacent area of northern western Afghanistan to northwest India, followed by the rise of the Iranian culture at around 1500 BCE, and the Iranian migrations into Iran at c. 800 BCE.

The term "Indo-Aryan" is used today to describe a large group of people in the region who speak Indo-Aryan languages, which are part of the Indo-European language family. In India, Indo-Aryans are estimated to make up around 72% of the population. In Pakistan, the largest ethnic group is Punjabi, followed by Pashtun, Sindhi, and Saraiki, all of which are considered Indo-Aryan. In Bangladesh, the majority population are Bengalis, who speak an Indo-Aryan language. In Sri Lanka, the Sinhalese are the largest ethnic group, and they also speak an Indo-Aryan language.

India today has the largest population in the world by country, 1,464,499,731¹⁵. About 80% are Hindus.

Vedic Religion

Before migrating to India, the Indo Aryans practiced a religion centered around the worship of nature and the performance of rituals, particularly fire sacrifices known as yajnas. This early form of religion is often referred to as the Historical Vedic religion or Vedism. These practices and beliefs are documented in the Vedas, which later became foundational texts for Hinduism.

The Indo Aryans revered various aspects of nature, including celestial bodies like the sun and sky, and natural forces like fire and wind. Elaborate fire rituals were central to their religious practice, with offerings made to deities like Agni (fire) and Indra (war and weather).

While the Vedic religion shares some deities with later Hinduism, its pantheon and the emphasis on certain deities differed somewhat.

The Vedic religion played a role in shaping the early social structure, which later evolved into the caste system.

The Vedic religion is considered a precursor to Hinduism, with some of its rituals and beliefs persisting into modern Hinduism, though with significant transformations.

Their hymns and texts were then passed on from generation to generation, from teacher to student, by chanting them aloud; they were not yet written down. Eventually, the great rishi, Vyasa, compiled all of their hymns and texts into four collections which are now known as the Vedas.

It seems Hinduism was a new totality, an amalgamation of the local existing and the new Vedic. To the extent that the Vedas are Vedic and forms the core content of the new religion, one may think of Hinduism as having been brought into being by the Indo Aryans.

The Indo Aryans, before their arrival in India, likely had creation theories rooted in Proto-Indo-European cosmology. Comparative linguistic and cultural studies suggest a common origin with other Indo-European peoples, including elements like sky gods, cosmic order, and a cyclical view of time. Many elements of Vedic cosmology, such as the importance of fire rituals and the concept of a cosmic creator (Brahman), can be traced back to these earlier Proto-Indo-European ideas.

Caste System

The Indo-Aryans had a social hierarchy that is considered a precursor to the later caste system in India, even before their migration into the Indian subcontinent.

This system, known as the varna system, involved a division of society into four broad classes: Brahmins (priests and scholars), Kshatriyas (warriors and rulers), Vaishyas (merchants and farmers), and Shudras (labourers and servants). These were initially more functional, based on occupation and skill, rather than strictly hereditary.

While the system was less rigid in its early stages, it gradually became more hierarchical and hereditary, eventually evolving into the complex caste system seen in later Indian history. with social mobility becoming increasingly restricted. This process was influenced by various factors, including the interaction with the indigenous populations of the Indian subcontinent.

The Vedas, ancient scriptures composed by the Indo-Aryans, played a role in shaping the social structure and religious beliefs, which in turn influenced the development of the caste system.

The native Dravidian societies of South India had their own social structures, often based on tribal affiliations and specific occupations, which were different from the varna system. The mixing of these systems after the Indo Aryan migration contributed to the diversity of castes in India

¹⁵ - https://www.worldometers.info/world-population/india-population/#google_vignette

The caste system as it exists today is a result of the interaction and mixing of the Indo Aryan varna system with the existing social structures of the indigenous populations.

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Early Vedic Age (1500 – 500 BCE):

The early Vedic period (1500–500 BCE), was the period in the late Bronze age and early Iron age of the subcontinent, following the collapse of the Indus Valley Civilisation, leading to the “second urbanisation” around 500 BCE.

With progress into the Iron age, their improved tools and weapons of the Indo-Aryans enabled them to penetrate the more forested Ganges valley and command larger territories and local populations. Around 1200–1000 BCE Indo Arya culture spread eastward to the fertile plains. Iron tools also allowed for the adoption of a more settled, agricultural way of life.

The Vedic Age (1500 – 500 BCE) of India was the period in which the Indo Aryans became settled into the Indian environment and integrated with the local population. They progressively migrated eastward centering in the region of Magadha (around present day Bihar).

They transitioned into the Iron age, which besides advances in agriculture, tools and weapons, led to advances in the arts and crafts, and wider trade and cultural exchange. All this brought about India's second urbanisation (600-200 BCE) ¹⁶.

One effect was to attract growing populations, including both non-Vedic Aryan sub-groups and non-Aryan tribes, into these urban centres. The result was creating in kingdoms (janapadas) and empires (mahajanapadas), and finally dynasties of rulers. The second half of the Vedic period was characterised by the emergence of towns.

Societal Development

Upon arrival, the Indo Aryans were basically nomads. comfortable in the Indus environment, centered in the Punjab. The society was patriarchal, organised into tribes rather than kingdoms, and primarily sustained by a pastoral way of life.

The Indo Aryans who migrated to the Gangetic plains intermarried with local women. Genetic studies indicate that Aryan men reproduced with local women at high rates, leading to a new social elite with lighter skin tones. This mixing likely involved displacement or elimination of local men and may have involved violence and coercion, though some intermixing may have been voluntary.

One perspicacious commentator put his finger on the essence of the universal process that operated here:

“Within a few generations, the Indo-Aryans, and this new mixed elite with lighter skin, became a force to reckon with. In a way the Indo-Aryan strategy was very effective. Through mating, aggressive power, or cultural diffusion, they colonised the minds of a local elite to establish themselves. This local elite then started championing Indo-Aryan culture, religion, and language. This became a path to upward mobility in the emerging social order.”¹⁷

As the Indo Aryans and local women inter-married, a new Indian society emerged, speaking Prakrit instead of Sanskrit.

The social infrastructure and institutions became more sophisticated, requiring written language. One outcome was to give Brahministic Hinduism its full definition. The Vedas were written down. The

¹⁶ - The first was in the Indus Valley Civilisation.

¹⁷ - <https://www.namitarora.com/Indians.html>

rituals were codified. The caste (jati) system became fully developed, with the large increases of the priestly and warriors classes and the diversification of the economy.

Facultative (Religious) Development

Our focus is necessarily on the religious development of the Indian people. Culturally, the emerging India was a Hindu society. The latter was the amalgamation or fusing together of the Indo Aryan's Vedic religion and varna system with the resident socio-religious practices of the subcontinent.

Editorial Note

Hinduism is an umbrella term for a range of religious and spiritual practices unified by adherence to the concept of dharma, a cosmic order maintained by its followers through rituals and righteous living, as expounded in the Vedas. It has also been described by the modern term Sanatana Dharma (eternal dharma) emphasising its eternal nature. The Indian constitution uses the term "Hindu", although the latter does not define it.

Vedas

The Vedic period was marked by the composition of their extensive collections of hymns (Vedas). They were orally transmitted by the Indo Aryans until progressively written down, starting in the first half of the Vedic age.

Rigveda:

Composed primarily between 1500-1200 BCE, with some scholars suggesting a wider range of 1700-1100 BCE. It is the oldest layer of Vedic Sanskrit literature and consists of hymns dedicated to various deities.

Samaveda:

Composed around 1200-800 BCE, it is largely based on the Rigveda and consists of chants and melodies used in rituals.

Yajurveda:

Also composed around 1200-800 BCE, it contains formulas and liturgical texts used in the performance of sacrifices.

Atharvaveda:

Composed around 1000-800 BCE, it contains a collection of spells, incantations, and charms.

Axial Age

In terms of facultative development, scholars speak of the second phase of the Vedic age (600 – 200 BCE) as its own "axial age" - like the "Warring States period" in China about the same time period which gave us Lao Tze and Confucius. It was the period of India's "second. urbanisation", the growth of towns and cities – as well as states, kingdoms and the first empires, There was an emergence of philosophic thought and questionings about Brahministic formulations of the Vedic dharmatic theology,

Śramaṇic Movement

Śramaṇic refers to a set of Indian religious traditions that emerged in ancient India, emphasising ascetic practices and renunciation as paths to spiritual liberation. .

Śramaṇic philosophies explored concepts like rebirth, liberation from the cycle of suffering, and the nature of reality, often through individualistic and experimental approaches.

Śramaṇic traditions emphasized practices like asceticism, self-denial, and renunciation of worldly life as means to attain spiritual enlightenment.

Unlike the Vedic tradition, which centered on priests (Brahmins) and elaborate rituals, Śramaṇic traditions often rejected the authority of the Vedas and the social structures they supported.

While united by their rejection of the Vedic system, Śramaṇic traditions encompassed a wide range of beliefs, including differing views on the soul, free will, the nature of reality, and the permissibility of violence and meat-eating. .

Śramaṇic ideas, particularly those concerning rebirth (saṃsāra) and liberation (moksha), have had a profound and lasting influence on various Indian religious and philosophical systems.

Śramaṇic practice was often characterized by individualism and experimentation, with individuals pursuing spiritual paths based on their own insights and experiences, rather than solely relying on established texts or

Jainism and Buddhism were two examples of the Śramaṇic movement. Mahavira re-launched **Jainism** around 530 BCE and Siddhartha Buddha received enlightenment and launched **Buddhism** about 528 BCE.

Charvaka Movement

There were even atheist philosophers, known as Charvaka, rejecting concepts like the soul, afterlife, and the authority of the Vedas. Some schools within Hinduism, like Samkhya, developed atheistic elements, though they are still considered astika (orthodox) for accepting the Vedas. In this ferment,

Puranic Hinduism

Mainstream Hinduism proceeded to develop with the following major works:

Brahmanas

Composed 900-500 BCE Commentary and elaboration on Vedas and description of religious procedures.

Upanishads

Composed about 800-400 BCE, Philosophy in response to Vedas and Brahmanas. There are 108 Upanishads written over the years, among which 13 are considered the principal ones.

Puranas

Original about 700 BCE. Historic texts, usually about a royal lineage or local legends.. There are 18 Major Puranas and 18 Minor Puranas, with over 400,000 verses, composed between 3rd and 10th centuries, solidifying mythology and theology, and creating Puranic Hinduism. The Puranas are known for the intricate layers of symbolism depicted within their stories.

Itihasa (Epics)

Ramayana, composed 800 BCE. Mahabharata, composed 300 BCE.

Sangam Literature

Composed 300BCE-300CE. Collection of texts on ethics, polity, love, and ancient Indian lifestyle, especially in the southern part of the peninsular India

Early Vedic Kingdoms

The social progress of the Indian subcontinent, from about 1200 BCE to the 6th century BCE, is defined by the rise of Janapadas, which are realms, republics and kingdoms.

The Kuru Kingdom (1200–450 BCE) was the first state-level society of the Vedic period, corresponding to the beginning of the Iron Age in north-western India.

The Kuru state organised the Vedic hymns into collections and developed the srauta ritual of formal fire worship to uphold the social order. When the Kuru kingdom declined, the centre of Vedic culture shifted to their eastern neighbours, the Panchala kingdom.

During the Late Vedic Period, the kingdom of Videha emerged as a new centre of Vedic culture, situated even farther to the East (in what is today Nepal and Bihar state).

The latter part of this period corresponds with a consolidation of increasingly large states and kingdoms, called mahajanapadas, across Northern India. They developed as tribes (Janas), established territorial organisations leading to the formation of stable settlements or "states" known as Janapadas, and these evolved into the Mahajanapadas

Mahajanapadas (500 – 250 CBE)

The Mahajanapadas period (500 BC – 250 BC) saw the rise of sixteen Mahajanapadas, or large territorial states, from the earlier Janapadas. These Mahajanapadas, with their capital cities, played a crucial role in the urban development of the subcontinent..

The Mahajanapadas emerged from the late Vedic period and flourished between the 6th and 4th centuries BCE. The 16 Mahajanapadas were powerful kingdoms and oligarchic republics.

These kingdoms were important centres of political, economic, and cultural activity, marking a significant period in ancient Indian history. .

Over time, some of the smaller or weaker kingdoms and republics were eliminated by stronger rulers, and some were annexed by or became part of larger, more powerful ones like Magadha.

Second Urbanisation

The "second urbanisation"¹⁸ refers to a period roughly between the 6th and 2nd centuries BCE, marked by the emergence of numerous urban centres, particularly in the fertile Gangetic plains – and particularly burgeoning Mahajanapadas.

New cities emerged as political, administrative, and economic hubs. Some prominent examples include Rajagriha, Shravanti, Kashi, Vaishali, Kaushamb, Taxila, Ujjain and Pataliputra.

Long-distance trade routes expanded, connecting different parts of India and even reaching regions like Persia and Central Asia. This trade was facilitated by the use of standardised coinage and the development of artisan and craft guilds.

The rise of new social groups like artisans and merchants, alongside the established priestly and warrior classes, led to a more complex social structure.

Political centralisation, under powerful empires like the Magadha empire, further shaped the urban landscape. The cities were characterised by a centralized administration. Many of these cities, like Kashi, were important religious centres, attracting pilgrims and scholars from across the region.

Merchant activity played a pivotal role in shaping the urban landscape and expansion of trade networks. Cities located on major trade routes, such as Taxila, Pataliputra, and experienced rapid growth due to their strategic positions. Toll taxes became important to protect the highways. The first punch-marked coins in India were minted by the Mahajanapadas and merchant guilds of this region.

As is universally the case, urbanisation signaled growing social and cultural sophistication, intellectual exchange and eventually secularism. In this case, among others, it led to the sramana movement and the birth of Jainism and Buddhism.

¹⁸ - The "first urbanisation" was the Indus Valley civilisation.

Magadha

(684 - 320 BCE)

The Magadha Empire's rule is generally dated from approximately 684 BCE to 320 BCE. This period encompasses the rule of three main dynasties. The Haryanka dynasty was the first powerful dynasty from around 544 BCE to 412 BCE. The Shishunaga dynasty took over, and the Nanda dynasty succeeded it and ruled until around 320 BCE.

Magadha was originally one of the sixteen Mahajanapadas, which grew and absorbed most of the others.

The territory of the initial Magadha kingdom corresponded to the modern day Indian state of Bihar. The region of Greater Magadha included neighbouring regions in the eastern Gangetic plains (including Bengal) and had a distinct culture and belief.

Magadha's rulers played a crucial role in the spread of Buddhism and Jainism. Bimbisara is known to have supported both religions, while Ajatasatru's patronage of Buddhism is highlighted by the first Buddhist Council being held in Rajagriha during his reign.

Later, the throne of Magadha was usurped by Mahapadma Nanda, the founder of the Nanda dynasty (345 – 322 BCE), which conquered much of north India. The Nanda dynasty was overthrown by Chandragupta Maurya the founder of the Maurya empire (322–185 BCE).

There is much uncertainty about the succession of kings and the precise chronology of Magadha prior to the Nanda empire

Nanda Empire

(345 – 322 BCE)

The **Nanda Empire** (345 BCE– 322 BCE) was a vast empire that governed in Magadha, with an enormous geographical reach in northeastern India. The Nandas built on the successes of their predecessors and instituted a more centralised administration. Ancient sources credit them with amassing great wealth, which was probably a result of the introduction of a new currency and taxation system.

Greco-Roman writers depict this kingdom as a great military power. The prospect of a war against this kingdom, coupled with the exhaustion resulting from almost a decade of campaigning, led to a mutiny among his homesick soldiers, putting an end to Alexander the Great's Indian campaign.

Ancient texts also suggest that the Nandas were unpopular among their subjects because of their low-status birth, excessive taxation, and general misconduct. The last Nanda king was overthrown by Chandragupta Maurya, founder of the Maurya empire.

Alexander the Great

(327. -325 BCE)

The Indian campaign of Alexander the Great began in 327 BC and lasted until 325 BC. Within two years, he expanded to include Gandhara and the Indus valleys of Punjab and Sindh surpassing the earlier Persian frontiers.

Alexander and his troops advanced into Punjab, where they were confronted by Porus, the regional Indian king. In 326 BC, Alexander defeated Porus but that engagement was possibly the Macedonian's most costly battle.

Alexander's then continued eastward leading his army into a confrontation with the Nanda empire. According to Greek sources, the Nanda army was five times the size of the Macedonian army. Alexander's troops, increasingly exhausted, homesick, and anxious by the prospects of having to further face large Indian armies throughout the Gangetic plain, mutinied refusing to advance his push to the east. Alexander relented under the conviction that it was better to return. He subsequently

turned southward, advancing through southern Punjab as well as Sindh, where he conquered more tribes before finally turning westward.

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Maurya Empire (320 – 185 BCE)

The **Maurya Empire** was geographically extensive, with its power base in Magadha. Founded by Chandragupta Maurya 320 BCE, it existed in loose-knit fashion until 185 BCE. Through military conquests and diplomatic treaties, he defeated the Nanda dynasty and extended his suzerainty as far westward as Afghanistan and as far south as the northern Deccan.

During the rule of Chandragupta's grandson, Asoka (268–232 BCE), the empire briefly controlled the major urban hubs and arteries of the subcontinent, excepting the deep south. Outside the core regions, the empire's geographical extent was dependent on the loyalty of military commanders who controlled the armed cities scattered within it.

The Mauryan economy was helped by the earlier rise of Buddhism and Jainism, creeds that promoted non-violence, proscribed ostentation, or frowned on superfluous sacrifices and rituals. It reduced the costs of economic transactions; by coinage; and by the use of writing, which might have boosted more intricate business dealings. To promote movement and trade, the Maurya dynasty built roads, most prominently a winter-time road, in the north, and others connecting the Ganges basin to Arabian Sea coast and the mineral rich mines in the south.

The population of South Asia during the Mauryan period has been estimated to be between 15 and 30 million. The empire's period of dominion was marked by exceptional creativity in art, architecture, inscriptions and produced texts, but also by the consolidation of caste in the Gangetic plain in and the declining rights of women in the mainstream Indo-Aryan speaking regions of India.

Asoka

As a young prince, Ashoka (r. 272–232 BCE) was a brilliant commander who crushed revolts in Ujjain and Taxila. As emperor he was ambitious and aggressive, re-asserting the Empire's superiority in southern and western India.

His conquest of Kalinga (262–261 BCE) proved to be the pivotal event of his life. Ashoka's army succeeded in overwhelming Kalinga forces of royal soldiers and citizen militias. An estimated 100,000 soldiers and civilians were killed in the furious warfare, including over 10,000 of Imperial Mauryan soldiers. Hundreds of thousands of people were adversely affected by the destruction and fallout of war. Ashoka began feeling remorse. Although the annexation of Kalinga was completed, Ashoka embraced the teachings of Buddhism, and renounced war and violence. He sent out missionaries to travel around Asia.

Ashoka expanded friendly relations with states across Asia and Europe, and he sponsored Buddhist missions. He undertook a massive public works building campaign across the country. Over 40 years of peace, harmony and prosperity made Ashoka one of the most successful and famous monarchs in Indian history. He remains an idealised figure of inspiration in modern India.

After the violent Kalinga War, Asoka embraced Buddhism and promoted its tenets in edicts scattered around South Asia, most commonly in clusters along the well-travelled road networks. The Edicts of Asoka, set in stone, are found throughout the subcontinent. Ashoka's edicts state his policies and accomplishments.

He sponsored Buddhist missionaries to Sri Lanka, northwest India, and Central Asia, which played a salient role in Buddhism becoming a world religion, and himself a figure of world history.

As Ashoka's edicts forbade both the killing of wild animals and the destruction of forests, he is seen by some modern environmental historians as an early embodiment of that ethos.

Asoka commissioned the construction of monasteries and schools, as well as the publication of Buddhist literature across the empire. He is believed to have built as many as 84,000 stupas across the subcontinent.

Ashoka helped convene the Third Buddhist Council of India's and South Asia's Buddhist orders near his capital, a council that undertook much work of reform and expansion of the Buddhist religion. Indian merchants embraced Buddhism and played a large role in spreading the religion across the Mauryan Empire.

Ashoka did not abolish the caste system. While he embraced Buddhism and promoted its principles of equality and social harmony, he did not directly dismantle the existing social hierarchy based on caste. His efforts focused on promoting dharma (righteous conduct) and treating all individuals with respect, but this did not equate to a formal abolition of the caste system.

The population of South Asia (India today) during the Mauryan period has been estimated to be between 15 and 30 million.

Fermentation Period Multiple Kingdoms

Shunga empire (187 to 75 BCE)

The Maurya dynasty was overthrown around 187 BCE when Pushyamitra Shunga, the commander-in-chief of Mauryan Imperial forces and a Brahmin, assassinated the last of the Mauryan emperors, and established the Shunga empire (187 to 75 BCE). Buddhist sources mention that Pushyamitra was hostile towards Buddhists and allegedly persecuted the faith.

The empire ruling entity centred around Magadha and controlled most of the northern subcontinent, which extended its control as far west as the Punjab. This dynasty was also responsible for successfully fighting and resisting the Indo-Greeks kingdoms.

The Shungas were important patrons of culture at a time when some of the most important developments in Hindu thought were taking place.

A large number of Buddhist monasteries were allegedly converted to Hindu temples. While it is established there was religious competition during this time, with the Shungas preferring the former to the latter, historians argue that persecution of Buddhists by Shungas were largely exaggerated.

Indo- Greek Kingdom (200 BC–10 CE)

The period saw multiple kingdoms and empires emerge and succeeded one another. Their wars, societal, economic and cultural developments would take us in due course to the Classical age. Of particular interest was the Indo-Greek kingdom (200 BC–10 CE).

The Greeks to the east of the Seleucid empire had been divided to the Graeco-Bactrian Kingdom and the Indo-Greek Kingdom. The latter kingdom was founded when the Graeco-Bactrian king Demetrius I invaded India from Bactria in about 200 BC.

The Indo-Greek Kingdom, also known as the Yavana Kingdom, was a Hellenic-Greek kingdom covering various parts of modern-day Afghanistan through to northwestern India. The term "Indo-" loosely describes a number of various Hellenistic states, ruling from regional capitals.

During the two centuries of their rule, the Indo-Greek blended Greek and Indian ideas, as seen in the archaeological remains. The Indo-Greeks ultimately disappeared as a political entity around 10 AD following the invasions of the Indo-Scythians and Indo-Parthians.

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The Early Classical Period (c. 320 CE – 600 CE)

The "Classical period", also known as the "Shastriya Yug", is usually known to be the period from the late Mauryan Empire (3rd century BCE) to the end of the Gupta Empire (6th century CE),

This period is considered a golden age in Indian culture, art, literature, and science. In particular, it had a great influence on Sanskrit literature, Hinduism, and Indian philosophy.

This period saw the rise of various regional kingdoms, including the Satavahana dynasty. It also witnessed the flourishing of Sangam literature in South India.

Gupta Empire (320 CE–600 CE)

The Classical age refers to the period when much of the subcontinent was reunited under the Gupta empire.

The ruling dynasty of the empire was founded by the king Sri Gupta and the most notable rulers of the dynasty were Chandragupta I, Samudragupta, Chandragupta II and Skandagupta.

Samudragupta expanded the empire through conquests. Chandragupta II was known for his cultural achievements and patronage of the arts.

Samudragupta directly controlled a large part of the Indo-Gangetic plain, as well as a substantial part of central India. His empire comprised a number of monarchical and tribal tributary states of northern India, and of the south-eastern coastal region of India.

The Gupta rulers were known for their patronage of the arts, including literature, sculpture, and painting. This gave rise to achievements that "set standards of form and taste [that] determined the whole subsequent course of art, not only in India but far beyond her borders".

The Gupta period produced scholars such as Kalidasa, Aryabata, Varahamihira, and Vatsyayana who made advances in a variety of academic fields.

Many Hindu epics and literary sources, such as Mahabharata and Ramayana, were canonised during this period. The Puranas, earlier long political administration poems on a variety of subjects, are also thought to have been committed to written texts around this period.

They also made advancements in mathematics, astronomy, and medicine. Wikki lists extensive details of inventions and developments in engineering, art, literature mathematics, astronomy, religions and philosophy, many of which occurred in this period – including the decimal system and concept of zero. The high points of this cultural creativity is seen in Gupta architecture, sculpture and painting.

Trade ties made the region an important cultural centre and set the region up as a base that influenced nearby kingdoms and regions. In the mid-fourth century, the Gupta Empire occupied the territories in Eastern Gandhara, establishing post at Taxila. The city became well known for its trade links, including silk, sandalwood, horses, cotton, silverware, pearls, and spices. It is during this time that the city heavily features in classical Indian literature – both as a centre of culture as well as a militarised border city

Hinduism was followed by the rulers, and the Brahmins flourished in the Gupta empire but the Guptas tolerated people of other faiths as well. The worship of Vishnu and Shiva becoming more prominent

The Guptas performed Vedic sacrifices to legitimise their rule, but they also patronised Buddhism as an alternative to Brahmanical orthodoxy.

The empire eventually declined due to invasions of the Hunas from Afghanistan, internal conflicts, and decentralisation of power. A 2019 study indicated that another cause of the Gupta Empire's downfall was a devastating flood which happened around the middle of the 6th century.

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Hindu Synthesis

The "Hindu synthesis" refers to the period between 200 BCE and 300 CE, where various Indian religious and philosophical traditions, including Brahmanical, Śramaṇic, and Buddhist influences, were integrated into what is recognized today as Hinduism.

The Hindu synthesis, took place primarily during the period of the second urbanisation and the early Classical period of Hinduism. This period saw the composition of the Epics and the first Puranas, which played a crucial role in disseminating religious ideology.

The Vedic period (roughly 1500-500 BCE) laid the foundation with its rituals and scriptures according to historical sources.

The period between 800 BCE and 200 BCE is considered a formative period for Hinduism, Jainism, and Buddhism, with a shift in focus from Vedic rituals.

The synthesis itself is seen as occurring between 300 BCE and 300 CE, a time of significant social and religious change.

The period of the Gupta Empire (c. 320-650 CE) is often seen as a golden age for Hinduism, where the synthesis further consolidated and spread.

Synthesis

The Hindu synthesis involved a gradual process of incorporating elements from these diverse traditions into what would become Hinduism. This included:

- . **1 Incorporation of Sramana ideas:** Buddhist and Jain concepts like renunciation, karma, and liberation were integrated into the Hindu framework.
- . **2 Development of Bhakti:** The Bhakti movement, emphasising personal devotion to deities, also became a significant part of the synthesis.
- . **3 Assimilation of local deities:** Local deities and cults were assimilated into the larger Hindu pantheon, often identified with Vedic gods, and
- . **4 Influence of Smriti literature:** The Smriti texts, including the epics (like the Ramayana and Mahabharata) and Puranas, played a crucial role in codifying and popularizing these integrated beliefs and practices.

The synthesis continued to evolve with the rise of different schools of thought like Vedanta, Samkhya, and Yoga, and the Bhakti movement.

The Hindu synthesis led to a more inclusive and diverse religious landscape, with a wider range of philosophical schools, deities, and practices accepted within the Hindu fold. It also led to the development of the caste system and the concept of dharma.

The Sramana traditions drove the so-called Hindu synthesis after the Vedic period, that spread to southern India and parts of Southeast Asia. As it spread, this new Hinduism assimilated popular non-Vedic gods and other traditions from local cultures, and integrated societal divisions, called the caste system.

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Late Classical period (600- 1200 CE)

After the collapse of the Gupta empire in the 6th century, India was again ruled by numerous regional kingdoms.

Harsha empire (606 to 647 CE).

King Harshavardhana, also known as Harsha, is considered as one of the most prominent Indian emperors in the 7th century CE. He was the son of Prabhakar Vardhana, the founder of the Pushyabhuti Dynasty or the Vardhana Dynasty.

At the height of Harsha's power, his realm covered much of northern and northwestern India, with the Narmada River as its southern boundary. He eventually made Kanyakubja (present-day Kannauj, in Uttar Pradesh) his imperial capital, and reigned until 647 CE.

After the fall of the Gupta Empire, King Harshavardhana was able to bring much of northern India under his control.

Harshavardhana was the last great Hindu emperor of India. The end of the reign of Harshavardhana in 648 CE marked the end of the ancient era and the beginning of the medieval.

Disintegration

After the end of the Gupta Empire and the collapse of the Harsha Empire, power became decentralised in India. Several larger kingdoms emerged, with "countless vassal states". The kingdoms were ruled via a feudal system. Smaller kingdoms were dependent on the protection of the larger kingdoms.

The disintegration of central power led to regionalisation of religiosity, and religious rivalry. Local cults and languages were enhanced, and the influence of "Brahmanic ritualistic Hinduism" was diminished. Rural and devotional movements arose, along with Shaivism, Vaishnavism, Bhakti and Tantra.

Buddhism lost its position after the 8th century, due to the loss of financial support from royal donors and the lack of appeal among the rural masses, and began to disappear in India. This was reflected in the change of puja-ceremonies at the courts in the 8th century, where Hindu gods replaced the Buddha as the "supreme, imperial deity".

Brahmanism underwent a radical transformation at the hands of the Purana composers, resulting in the rise of Puranic Hinduism.

Puranic Hinduism

This period saw the consolidation of classical Hinduism, with the development of Puranic Hinduism and the rise of influential figures like Adi Shankara, who systematised Advaita Vedanta.

Puranic Hinduism was a "multiplex belief-system which grew and expanded as it absorbed and synthesised polaristic ideas and cultic traditions". It was distinguished from its Vedic Smarta roots by its popular base, its theological and sectarian pluralism, its Tantric veneer, and the central place of bhakti.

Puranic Hinduism refers to a branch of Hinduism centered around the Puranas, a collection of ancient Indian texts that narrate Hindu mythology, cosmology, and religious practices. It is characterised by its emphasis on devotion (bhakti) to specific deities like Vishnu, Shiva, and the Mother Goddess, and the concept of avatars, or divine incarnations.

The Puranas tell stories of deities, their interactions with humans, and the creation and structure of the universe. Puranic Hinduism shifted from the Vedic emphasis on ritualistic practices to a more personal and emotional devotion to specific deities according to some Hindu texts.

The concept of the Trimurti (Brahma, Vishnu, and Shiva) as the primary deities emerged, leading to the development of major Hindu sects like Vaishnavism (devotion to Vishnu), Shaivism (devotion to Shiva), and Shaktism (devotion to the Mother Goddess).

The idea that deities can descend to Earth in human or animal form (avatars) is a central concept in Puranic Hinduism.

The Puranas, written in Sanskrit but later translated, made religious knowledge more accessible to the common people, unlike the Vedic texts which were primarily for the priestly class.

Puranic Hinduism introduced more elaborate temple worship and rituals, often involving deities, sacred objects, and specific practices.

Pilgrimages to holy sites and the performance of specific vows (vrata) became important aspects of religious practice.

Puranic Hinduism significantly influenced Indian art, literature, and culture, with countless stories and depictions of deities and their activities.

In essence, Puranic Hinduism represents a shift from the more abstract and ritualistic focus of the Vedic period to a more personal, devotional, and accessible form of Hinduism, characterised by its rich mythology, diverse deities, and emphasis on bhakti.

The classical period laid the foundation for many of the beliefs, practices, and philosophical systems that are central to Hinduism today.

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Historical South (300 BCE- 1297 CE)

Much of the Deccan and southern India were largely unaffected by the state of political flux in the north.

The Classical Age of Hinduism, which seeped through southward, continued to flourish, integrating with local religious traditions. These developed characteristic South Indian Hindu features, including their temple urbanisation.

Two of the “big three” southern empires predated the Mauryan empire. South Indian Hinduism is said historically to have been the source influence of Khmer kingdom in South East Asia, which went on to build Angkor Watt, the largest temple complex in the world originally worshipping Vishnu. Between all three, they ruled South India until the 13th century.

The Muvendhar

Muvendhar, also known as the “Three Crowned Kings”, refers to the triumvirate of ancient Tamil kingdoms: Chera, Chola, and Pandya. These kingdoms ruled over Tamilakam (present-day Kerala and Tamil Nadu) for centuries, leaving a lasting impact on South Indian history and culture.

. **Pandya** (600 BCE- 200 CE) Based in the southern region of Tamil Nadu, with Madurai as their capital.

. **Chola**: (300 BCE–1200 CE) Dominated the central and northern parts of Tamil Nadu, with their heartland in the Kaveri Delta.

. **Chera** (300 BCE to 1297 CE). Ruled over the western parts of Tamilakam, including present-day Kerala and parts of Tamil Nadu.

These three kingdoms were not just political entities but also important centres of trade, cultural exchange, and artistic development. The Muvendhar represented a sense of unified identity and political power for the Tamil people.

They frequently waged war against one another under a period of instability and between each other, but held control over Greater Tamilakam from 6th century BCE to the 13th century.

Pandya

The Pandyas were the earliest of the Muvendhar. They emerged around the 6th century BCE, with their rule documented back to the Sangam Age (circa 3rd century BCE to 3rd century CE).

The Pandya kingdom saw periods of both prosperity and decline. The Pandya dynasty experienced imperial dominance between the 6th and 10th centuries CE and again under the "Later Pandyas" in the 13th and 14th centuries CE.

They were known for their wealth, extensive trade networks, and powerful military. They controlled vast territories, including parts of present-day Tamil Nadu and even influencing regions of Sri Lanka.

Their power was built on a strong economy based on agriculture, trade (especially pearls and textiles), and industry (textiles, pottery, metalware, shipbuilding). The Pandyas were renowned for their extensive maritime trade, engaging with Rome, China, and Southeast Asia.

They were famous for being patrons of the Tamil Sangams, which were held in their capital, Madurai. They were also known for their contributions to Tamil culture, particularly in the areas of art and architecture.

Pandyan temples are known for their distinctive features like vimanas, gopurams, and mandapas, and their rock-cut sculptures and temple architecture are well-regarded.

The Pandya dynasty faced challenges from the rise of the Cholas and later from the Delhi Sultanate.

While their rule eventually declined, the Pandyas left behind a rich legacy of art, architecture, trade, and cultural influence that continues to be studied and admired.

Cholas

The Cholas were a prominent dynasty in South India, alongside the Chera and Pandya, who held sway over Tamilakam for centuries, eventually declining by the 13th century CE. The earliest datable references to the Chola are from inscriptions dated to the 3rd century BCE during the reign of Asoka of the Mauryan empire.

The Chola dynasty reached its peak as a powerful maritime empire during the mid-9th century CE.

They played a significant role in the Sangam Age, which is generally considered to span from 300 BCE to 1297 CE (see further on).

The Chola dynasty's rise to power began with Vijayalaya, who captured the Kaveri delta from the Pallavas. The dynasty's influence grew significantly under emperors like Rajaraja I and Rajendra I, who expanded their empire across South India and into Southeast Asia.

During this period, the Cholas engaged in extensive trade both within the Indian subcontinent and with foreign regions.

The Cholas had a well-developed maritime trade network, which allowed them to establish trade links with various regions, including Southeast Asia, Sri Lanka, the Arabian Peninsula and East Africa.

They possessed a strong navy and used it to protect their trade routes and maintain control over the seas. Their trading activities were not limited to goods but also extended to cultural and intellectual exchanges.

My own researches suggest that the Tamil merchants, the ancestors of my own people (the Peranakan Chitty Melaka) settled in Malacca in the 13th century under Chola naval protection¹⁹

One of the key commodities in Chola trade was spices. They actively participated in the spice trade, importing and exporting various spices such as pepper, cardamom, cinnamon, and ginger.

The Cholas also traded in other valuable commodities like precious stones, pearls, textiles, ivory, and perfumes. They were known for their craftsmanship and exported exquisite bronze sculptures, pottery, and textiles, which were highly sought after in foreign markets.

The Cholas were known for their military prowess: They built a strong navy and conducted successful overseas expeditions. They unified peninsular India south of the Tungabhadra river and held the territory as one state for three centuries between 907 and 1215 CE. .

They were patrons of art, architecture, and literature. They built magnificent temples, like the Brihadeeswarar Temple in Thanjavur, showcasing their devotion to Hinduism.

Their cities were home to diverse communities, including Chinese Buddhists, Tunisian Jews, and Bengali tantric masters.

The Chola Empire eventually declined due to internal conflicts and external pressures from other kingdoms like the Pandyas. However, their legacy as a powerful and influential dynasty in South Indian history remains significant.

Chera empire

The Chera dynasty, also known as Keralaputra, from the early historic or Sangam period in southern India, ruled over parts of present-day states Kerala and Tamil Nadu. Known as one of the Three Kingdoms, the Cheras have been documented as early as the third century BCE.

The Cheras were especially known for their extensive maritime trade. They controlled important ports along the Malabar Coast, which functioned as major hubs for international commerce, attracting merchants from various parts of the world, particularly from the Middle East. They also controlled Palakad gap and the Noyyal river valley, the principal trade route between the Malabar coast and eastern Tamil Nadu.

The Chera country played a crucial role in the highly lucrative spice trade. It was actively involved in the export of valuable spices such as black pepper, cardamom, cinnamon, and ginger. These commodities were in high demand in the Roman Empire and other western markets, and the Cheras appear to have capitalised on this demand to accumulate substantial wealth.

In addition to spices, the people also traded in other valuable goods, including ivory, pearls, textiles, precious stones, and forest products. With access to the abundant natural resources of the Western Ghats and the forests of Kerala, they were able to export timber, teak, sandalwood, and medicinal herbs—many of which were highly sought after in Middle Eastern markets.

Pallava dynasty

The Pallava dynasty existed from 275 to 897 CE, ruling a significant portion of the Deccan, also known as the Tondaimandalam with their capital at Kanchipuram.

¹⁹ - <https://www.smashwords.com/extreader/read/902177/1/the-chitty-melaka-story-second-edition>
<https://www.nlb.gov.sg/main/book-detail?cmsuuiid=2ba26ad1-4bb8-45cd-ba8c-11b46ca55b9f>

The Pallavas became a major power during the reign of Mahendravarman (600–630 CE) and Narasimhavvarman (630–668 CE,) and they dominated the southern Telugu region and the northern parts of the Tamil region for about 600 years, until the end of the 9th century.

The Pallavas are most noted for their advancements in architecture, particularly temple building, and their patronage of art, literature, and religion.

The Pallavas were significant patrons of art, architecture, and literature. They are renowned for their rock-cut temples and sculptures at Mahabalipuram, including the Shore Temple and various granite-carved structures. They also fostered religious practices across Jainism, Buddhism, and Brahmanism, and contributed to both Tamil and Sanskrit literature.

They were noted for their patronage of Hindu Vaishnava temple architecture, the finest example being the Shore Temple, an UNESCO heritage site.

They developed the Pallava script, from which Grantha ultimately took form. This script eventually gave rise to several other Southeast Asian scripts such as Khmer.

The Pallavas were involved in constant conflicts with neighbouring kingdoms, particularly the Chalukyas to the north and the Chola and Pandya kingdoms to the south. These conflicts, along with internal strife and the rise of the Cholas, ultimately led to their decline in the 9th century. The Pallavas were finally defeated by the Chola in the 9th century.

The Pallavas, while rulers of a region predominantly Dravidian, were likely not originally Dravidian themselves.. Historical and linguistic evidence suggests they migrated from the Andhra region (Telugu country) to the Tamil region, initially using Prakrit and Sanskrit rather than Tamil. They gradually adopted Tamil language and culture, becoming a significant force in the Dravidian south.

Sangam Age

The Sangam literature refers to the earliest available body of classical Tamil literature, produced during the ancient Tamilakam period (roughly 300 BCE to 300 CE).

It is a collection of poems, epics, and grammatical texts, offering insights into the socio-cultural life, love, war, trade, and governance of that era. It consists of:

. **Ettuthogai (Eight Anthologies):** A collection of eight anthologies of poems,

. **Pattupattu (Ten Idylls):** A collection of ten long poems and two renowned epics that offer narratives and insights into the social, political, and religious life of the time.

Tolkaappiyam: An ancient Tamil grammar text that serves as a foundational work for understanding the language and its structure.

The term "Sangam" itself signifies an association or academy of Tamil poets who convened in Madurai, traditionally believed to have been chaired by the sage Agastya.

The literature is broadly categorised into *akam* (inner, subjective experiences like love and emotions) and *puram* (outer, public aspects like war, heroism, and social interactions).

The literature explores a wide range of themes, including love (*akam*), heroism and public life (*puram*), governance, trade, and social customs.

While compiled and written down, Sangam literature has strong roots in an oral tradition of storytelling and poetry.

Sangam literature provides invaluable information about the social, political, economic, and cultural life of ancient Tamilakam. The literature serves as a historical source, offering details about the kingdoms, trade routes, and social practices of the period.

It is a cornerstone of Tamil language and literature, demonstrating the richness and complexity of the language at an early stage.

Sangam literature represents a significant literary achievement, showcasing the poetic talent and narrative skills of the Tamil poets.

Hindu Creation Mythology

Hinduism co-existed for several centuries with Buddhism, to finally gain the upper hand at all levels in the 8th century. From northern India this "Hindu synthesis", and its societal divisions, spread to southern India and parts of Southeast Asia, as courts and rulers adopted the Brahmanical culture.

A lotus flower grew from Lord Vishnu's navel with Brahma sitting on it. Brahma separated the flower into three parts - the heavens, the Earth and the sky. Out of loneliness, Brahma split himself into two to create a male and a female. From this male and female all beings were created.

In the beginning, Brahma sprang from the cosmic golden egg and he then created good and evil and light and dark from his own person. He also created the four types: gods, demons, ancestors and men, the first of whom was Manu

Cast and Skin Tone

The idea of a dark-skinned individual becoming a Brahmin, especially in the context of Tamil society, is complex and not straightforward. Brahmins, traditionally associated with priestly roles, are often perceived as belonging to a specific caste and lineage. However, social mobility and the fluidity of caste identities exist, although they can be complex and contested.

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Historically, caste systems in India, including Tamil Nadu, have been associated with a hierarchy where social status was often linked to perceived lineage and occupation. Skin tone, while not the sole determinant, has sometimes been a factor in caste perceptions.

Brahmins traditionally belong to the highest caste and are associated with specific lineages and priestly duties. The term "Brahmin" can also refer to a broader cultural identity, encompassing religious and social practices, as well as language and customs.

While caste hierarchies are rigid, social mobility has occurred in various ways. Some individuals may have adopted Brahminical customs and practices, potentially blurring the lines of caste identity. Others may have gained social recognition through wealth, education, or political influence, which could lead to upward mobility in social standing.

Tamil Brahmins, particularly Iyers and Iyengars, have distinct traditions and cultural practices. Skin tone among them can vary, reflecting the diversity of the Tamil population as a whole.

The concept of "becoming" a Brahmin is not a formal process with set rules. It's more about the adoption of Brahminical ways of life, acceptance by a Brahmin community, and possibly, a change in social perception.

In essence, while a dark-skinned individual becoming a Brahmin may not be a common or easily documented occurrence in the traditional sense, it's possible that through the adoption of Brahminical practices and cultural norms, along with social recognition, an individual could be perceived as such.

Hinduism In SEA

Hindu influences reached the Indonesian archipelago as early as the first century. Trade routes linked India with southern Burma, central and southern Siam, lower Cambodia and southern Vietnam and numerous urbanised coastal settlements were established there.

For more than a thousand years, Indian Hindu/Buddhist influence was, therefore, the major factor that brought a certain level of cultural unity to the various countries of the region.

From the 5th to the 13th century, South-East Asia had very powerful Indian colonial empires and became extremely active in Hindu and Buddhist architectural and artistic creation. The Sri Vijaya empire to the south and the Khmer empire to the north competed for influence.

Langkasuka was an ancient Hindu kingdom located in the Malay Peninsula. The kingdom, along with Old Kedah settlement, are probably the earliest territorial footholds founded on the Malay Peninsula.

From the 5th to 15th centuries, the Sri Vijaya empire, a maritime empire centred on the island of Sumatra, Indonesia, had adopted Mahayana and Vajrayana Buddhism under a line of rulers named the Saliendras. The empire declined due to conflicts with the Chola rulers of India.

The Majapahit empire was one of the last and greatest Hindu empires in maritime Southeast Asia. Its scion, Parameswara, would found Malacca, my home town in Malaya, where Tamil merchants, my ancestors, paid court to him.

Funan was a pre-Angkor Watt Cambodian kingdom, located around the Mekong delta, with Hindu legendary associations.

The kingdom of Champa controlled what is now south and central Vietnam from approximately 192 through 1697. The dominant religion was Hinduism and the culture was heavily influenced by India.

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The Muslim Empires (1206- 1857 CE)

Delhi Sultanate (1206- 1526 CE)

Muhammad of Ghor or Muhammad Ghori (1144 – 1206) , was a Turk ruler from the Ghurid dynasty of what is today central Afghanistan. His elder brother governed the western Ghurid regions whereas Muhammad extended Ghurid rule eastwards into South Asia. He laid the foundation of Islamic rule in the sub continent which lasted after him for nearly half a millennium under evolving Muslim dynasties.

After a failed invasion via the Sindh, Muhammad conquered the upper Indus plain along with most of the Punjab by 1186.

The Delhi Sultanate was established by Qutbuddin Aibak. He was a Turkic slave soldier who rose to prominence under Muhammad Ghori and took control of his Indian possessions after Ghori's death in 1206. Aibak then declared himself the independent ruler of Northern India, marking the beginning of the Delhi Sultanate.

The Delhi Sultanate, a powerful Islamic empire, ruled over a significant portion of the Indian subcontinent for roughly 320 years, from 1206 to 1526 CE. The Delhi Sultanate was comprised five distinct Turk-Afghan dynasties: the Mamluk (or Slave) Dynasty, the Khilji Dynasty, the Tughlaq Dynasty, the Sayyid Dynasty, and the Lodi Dynasty.

The Sultanate expanded its rule across northern India, with its southern frontier reaching the middle reaches of the Chambal River and the Ganges River.

The Sultanate was governed by Islamic law (Sharia) and the sultans were advised by religious scholars and officials.

The Sultanate relied on a strong military, including Turkish and Afghan soldiers, to maintain its rule and expand its territory.

The Sultanate left behind a rich legacy of architecture, including mosques, tombs, and forts, showcasing a blend of Islamic and Indian styles.

The Delhi sultanate made no break with the political traditions of the later Hindu period. The rulers sought paramountcy rather than sovereignty. They never reduced Hindu chiefs to unarmed impotence or established an exclusive claim to allegiance. The sultan was served by a heterogeneous elite Turks, Afghans, Khaljīs, and Hindu converts. He readily accepted Hindu officials and Hindu vassals. Threatened for long periods with Mongol invasion from the northwest and hampered by indifferent communications, the Delhi sultans perforce left a large discretion to their local governors and officials.

The Delhi Sultanate eventually declined due to internal conflicts, invasions (including by Timur), and the rise of regional powers. It saw the advent of the Malwa, Gujarat, and Bahmani sultanates, the last of which split in 1518 into the five Deccan sultanates. The Bengal sultanate also emerged as a major power, lasting over three centuries.

During this period, multiple strong Hindu kingdoms, notably the Vijayanagar empire and the Rajput states under the Kingdom of Mewar emerged and played significant roles in shaping the cultural and political landscape.

The use of paper spread from China through the Islamic world, and entered Europe in the early 12th century. In India, the first paper industry was developed in Kashmir, established by Sultan Zainul Abedin (Shahi Khan) of Kashmir in 1417-67 CE.

The Mughal Empire (1526-1857 CE)

The Mughal empire was the first pre-modern empire, contemporary with the rise of the European colonial empires of the Spanish, the Portuguese and the British. .

The modern period began for India when Mughal empire conquered most of the Indian subcontinent and for the first time began successfully administering the country as one.

This generated internal and external demand and the interlocking of India's productive potential to world markets. On the down side this attracted the colonial powers for precisely the same reason.

At its peak, the empire stretched from the outer fringes of the Indus River Basin in the west, northern Afghanistan in the northwest, and Kashmir in the north, to the highlands of present-day Assam and Bangladesh in the east, and to the uplands of the Deccan.

The population of the Mughal empire around 1600 was 115,000,000, close to the Ming dynasty's 150,000,000, but more penetrable.

The Mughals

The Mughal empire is conventionally said to have been founded in 1526 by Babur, a chieftain from what is today Uzbekistan.

The Mughals had Turco-Mongol roots (Chagatai Turks) and originated from the Fergana Valley in Central Asia, located in modern-day Uzbekistan.

Babur was a direct descendant of Timur (Timberlane) on his father's side and from Chagatai second son of the Mongol ruler Genghis Khan on his mother's side.

In 1494, at age 12, Babur succeeded his father as the ruler of Fergana, but was forced out by Uzbek chief Shaibani Khan after repeatedly trying to capture Samarkand.

After being expelled from Central Asia, Babur moved south and captured Kabul in 1504, establishing it as his permanent base of operations.

From 1519 to 1525, Babur used Kabul as the base to launch raids and reconnaissance expeditions into the Punjab region of the Indian subcontinent, eventually launching his final invasion of India from there in 1525–1526.

Babur utilised the Khyber Pass to invade India, finally defeating Ibrahim Lodi in 1526 at the First Battle of Panipat.

Babur (reigned 1526–30) was himself descended from the Turkic conqueror Timur (Tamerlane) on his father's side and from

The Mughal imperial structure, however, is sometimes dated to 1600, to the rule of Babur's grandson Akbar. This imperial structure lasted until 1720, shortly after the death of the last major emperor, Aurangzeb - during whose reign the empire achieved its maximum geographical extent. Notable Mughal emperors included Babur, Humayun, Akbar, Jahangir, Shah Jahan, and Aurangzeb. These rulers oversaw the empire's expansion, consolidation, and cultural flourishing.

Reduced subsequently to the region in and around Old Delhi by 1760, the empire was formally dissolved by the British Raj after the Indian Rebellion in 1857.

Societal Development

Although the Mughal Empire was sustained by military warfare, it did not suppress the cultures and peoples it came to rule; rather it equalised and placated them through new administrative practices, and diverse ruling elites, leading to more efficient, centralised, and standardised rule.

The base of the empire's collective wealth was agricultural taxes, instituted by the third Mughal emperor, Akbar. These taxes, which amounted to well over half the output of a peasant cultivator, were paid in the well-regulated silver currency, and drove the peasants and artisans to engage with the larger markets.

The relative peace maintained by the empire during much of the 17th century was a factor in India's economic expansion. The burgeoning European presence in the Indian Ocean and an increasing demand for Indian raw and finished products generated much wealth for the Mughal court.

Scholars speak of the Muslim metropolis of the Delhi Sultanate and the Mughal empire as the fourth urbanisation. According to one historic count, in 1594 there were 2,837 towns of which 180 were named as larger cities.

The Jama Masjid becomes a central site in these cities. Lahore, Agra were renowned cultural centres under the Delhi Sultanate and the Mughal Empire.

Vibrant bazaars and markets catered to the needs of the population, offering a wide range of goods and services.

India was primarily agricultural. The courtiers were paid by giving them a share of the village wealth.

Facultative Development

The religion was Sufism. Dargahs (shrines) became important. The Islamic holy man and mentor, the Pir, emerged alongside his Hindu counterpart.

There was more conspicuous consumption among the Mughal elite, resulting in greater patronage of painting, literary forms, textiles, and architecture especially during the reign of Shah Jahan. The Mughals blended Persian, Central Asian, and Indian artistic and cultural traditions. They are renowned for their architectural achievements, including the Taj Mahal, Red Fort, and numerous gardens.

A further distinction was the attempt of the Mughals, who were Muslim, to integrate Hindus and Muslims into a united Indian state.

Impact on Hinduism

While the Mughal emperors were Muslim, they generally adopted policies of religious tolerance, especially during the reigns of Akbar and his successors. This tolerance facilitated the flourishing of Hindu culture .

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Emperor Akbar was known for his liberal religious policies. He abolished the tax on non-Muslims, encouraged the participation of Hindus in the administration, and even engaged in discussions with Hindu religious leaders. He created a syncretic religion called Din-i-liah , which drew from various faiths, including Hinduism.

While some later emperors like Aurangzeb adopted more conservative policies, the overall trend was towards religious tolerance, with Hindus continuing to hold important positions in the government and military. The Mughal policies fostered a degree of integration with Hindus participating in the court and administration.

The interaction between Hindu and Muslim cultures led to the development of a composite culture, particularly in art, architecture, and music. Mughal rulers often patronised Hindu temples and commissioned Hindu religious texts and works of art.

Mughal architecture incorporated elements of Hindu design, while Hindu art saw the influence of Persian and Islamic styles.

Akbar's engagement with Hindu religious leaders and his own interpretations of Hindu beliefs influenced the development of Hindu thought and practice.

Hindu and Muslim religious practices sometimes blended within the imperial court and in the broader society, reflecting the cultural exchange.

The Mughal period left a lasting legacy of cultural synthesis in India, with the fusion of Hindu and Islamic artistic, architectural, and cultural traditions continuing to influence India today.

The relationship between the Mughals and Hinduism was complex, with periods of tolerance and integration alongside instances of conflict and tension.

Decline

The Mughals suffered a gradual decline in the early 18th century, largely due to the rising power of the Marathas who took control of extensive regions of the Indian subcontinent, and numerous Afghan invasions. It continued to exist as a considerably reduced and increasingly powerless entity until the mid-19th century.

Gun Powder

Gunpowder appears to have arrived in India from China during the second half of the 13th century.

It was then adopted for use in rockets (Hawai) by the Bahmani kingdom and the Delhi Sultanate in the second half of the 14th century.

The Mughal Empire is generally credited with first using gunpowder in India. Babur's victory at the First Battle of Paripat in 1526 against Lodi is seen as the key moment when gunpowder technology became prominent in Indian warfare.

Prior to the Mughals, regional states like Gujarat, Malwa, Mewar, and the Bahmanis had experience with firearms, but Babur's introduction of cannons and his successful military campaigns using gunpowder were the landmark developments.

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The European Mercantilists (1498 – 1857 CE)

Portuguese

The Portuguese colonial involvement in India was territorially limited but lasted from 1498 to 1961, leaving a lasting impact on the Indian subcontinent.

Vasco da Gama's arrival in Calicut (now Kozhikode) in 1498 marked the beginning, rounding the Cape of Good Hope and opening this sea route for the first time. The Portuguese established their first trading post in Cochin in 1500, and built forts in various parts of India, including Goa.

Besides Goa, the Portuguese held a significant presence in Daman, Diu, Dadra and Nagar Haveli. They also had trading posts and settlements in other coastal areas like Chennai (San Thome) and Nagapattinam.

The Portuguese introduced Christianity, European art, architecture, and music to India. They also brought new crops like potatoes, tomatoes, and cashews, which significantly impacted Indian cuisine.

Estado da India

Portugal's influence in India grew with the establishment of the "Estado da India" (Portuguese India) in 1505, centered in Cochin. Although their territorial control was limited to enclaves, the Portuguese exerted considerable influence in trade, religious practices, and cultural exchange.

Alfonso de Albuquerque, the second governor of Portuguese India, captured Goa from the Bijapur Sultanate in 1510, which took over as the capital and administrative and commercial centre of Portuguese India in 1530.

The Estado da India eventually encompassed territories from East Africa to Japan. Here's a more detailed timeline:

- . - **1510**: Afonso de Albuquerque captures Goa from the Bijapur Sultanate.
- . - **1511**: Albuquerque conquers Malacca (Malaysia) (my hometown).
- . - **1515**: Albuquerque colonizes Hormuz at the mouth of the Persian Gulf.
- . - **1530**: Goa is officially declared the capital of Portuguese India, replacing Cochin.
- . - **1546**: A fortress is established on Mozambique island.
- . - **1557**: The Ming Dynasty grants the Portuguese a trading base in Macao.

The Portuguese controlled key trade routes, particularly in spices, and implemented the Cartaz system, requiring merchants to purchase licenses for trade in the Indian Ocean.

The Portuguese control over India began to decline in the 17th century due to various factors, including competition from other European powers. The Dutch, British, and French established their presence in India, challenging Portuguese dominance.

The Portuguese also faced resistance from local Indian rulers and kingdoms, such as the Vijayanagar Empire and the Mughal Empire.

Finally, weak and ineffective leadership, internal conflicts, and corruption contributed to the decline of Portuguese power in India.

In the end, India annexed Goa, Daman, and Diu from Portuguese control on December 19, 1961, through Operation Vijay. The Governor of Portuguese India signed the Instrument of Surrender, marking the end of 450 years of Portuguese rule in India.

The Portuguese legacy in India is a testament to the country's rich cultural heritage, with many architectural, artistic, and culinary influences still visible today.⁴

Dutch East India Company

The Dutch East India Company (VOC) established a presence in India in the early 17th century, primarily to trade in spices, textiles, and other valuable commodities.

The Dutch established trading posts and factories in various parts of India, including:

- Pulicat: A trading post on the Coromandel Coast, established in 1610.
- Cochin: A major trading post in Kerala, established in 1663, and .
- Nagapattinam: A trading post on the Coromandel Coast, established in 1658.

The Dutch traded in a variety of goods, including:

- Spices - pepper, cinnamon, and other spices were highly valued in European markets.
- Textiles. Indian textiles, such as cotton and silk, were in high demand in Europe.
- Other commodities - Such as indigo, saltpetre, and precious metals

While the Dutch did not establish large-scale colonies in India, they did have control over some territories, including the island of Ceylon (now Sri Lanka), which they colonised from 1656 to 1815.

The Dutch presence in India declined in the 18th century, as the British East India Company expanded its influence in the region. The Dutch eventually ceded their Indian possessions to the British in the 19th century.

The Dutch colonial involvement in India was primarily driven by economic interests, and their legacy can still be seen in the architecture, culture, and trade networks of the regions where they were active.

French East India Company

The French involvement in colonial India began in the 17th century, with the establishment of the French East India Company in 1664.

They established their first factory in Gujarat at Surat in 1668, which served as the starting point for their establishments in India. Surat was a prosperous port. it was the emporium of India exporting gold and cloth. Another factory was established in Masulipatam in 1669.

The French acquired Pondicherry in 1673 from the Sultan of Bijapur, which became a significant stronghold. The French also established a township in Chandernagore near Calcutta in 1673.

The French East India Company expanded its influence in India, engaging in trade and politics, particularly in the Carnatic region.

The French clashed with the British East India Company, leading to the Carnatic Wars (1746-1763), which ultimately resulted in the decline of French power in India.

Despite their initial successes, the French were unable to withstand British expansion, and their influence waned throughout the 19th century. The French retained control over a few enclaves, including Pondicherry, Mahe, Yanam, Karaikal, and Chandernagore, until they were transferred to the Indian Union in 1954.

The French legacy in India can be seen in the cultural, architectural, and administrative structures that continue to influence the regions they once controlled.²

Danish East India Company

The Danish involvement in Indian colonial history centered on the Danish East India Company. They established their first settlement in Tranquebar (Tarangambadi), Tamil Nadu, in 1620. This became their main base in Asia. They also established a presence in Serampore (West Bengal).

They established settlements and engaged in trade, particularly in textiles and spices. They also engaged in cultural and educational activities, including the establishment of a printing press and Bible translation in Tamil.

India's impressive textile output had relied on hand-loom technology, but that part of the process was now done by machines in Britain 4,500 miles away. British industrialists were also careful not to let the new technology get into the hands of competitors in India. As a result, the Indian economy collapsed.

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British East India Company

The British involvement in India began with the establishment of the British East India Company (EIC), also referred to herein as the "Company", in 1600, which initially focused on trade, particularly in spices. Over time, the company's influence expanded, and it played a significant role in shaping Indian society, economy, and politics.

The company's first Indian factory was established in 1611 at Masulipatam on the Andhra Coast of the Bay of Bengal, and its second in 1615 at Surat.

The Company won trading rights on the fringe of the Mughal empire in 1617. As the Mughal empire declined, the East India Company's influence in India grew steadily.

The high profits reported by the company after landing in India prompted James I to grant subsidiary licenses to other trading companies in England.

The Company established several key factories and trading posts in India. These included

- **Surat (1613)**. Established as an early foothold, Surat was one of the first English factories in India.
- **Madras (1639)**. (Now Chennai) Fort St. George was built here, making it a major British base in the south.
- **Bombay (1668)**. Originally a Portuguese possession, Bombay was gifted to the British and became another key location for the Company.
- **Calcutta (1686-90)**. Initially a settlement around the factory, Calcutta later became Fort William and a major centre of British power.
- **Hooghly (1651)**. The first factory in Bengal.

The factory in the village of Hooghly initially served as a trading post for the company's goods. Over time, the British established more factories in the region, including in Calcutta (now Kolkata), which eventually became their headquarters in Bengal.

The factories were crucial for the East India Company's incremental expansion for control over trade routes in India. Very soon they were re-organised into three presidencies:

Madras Presidency, in 1640
Bombay Presidency in 1668
Bengal Presidency in 1765 (after Plessey)

These locations served as crucial hubs for trade and administration.

How the British Conquered India

Throughout its history subcontinental India had been a patchwork of chiefdoms, kingdoms, sultanates, other political entities, periodically grouped and re-sorted under one empire, sultanate or another.

As an example when the Madras Presidency came into being, it was flanked by the Kingdoms of Mysore, Cochin and Pudukkottai and the State of Hyderabad, as well as Madhya Pradesh, political status unknown or in transition.

in the initial stages, therefore, economic and political expansion was incremental, on individual fronts, by alliances, treaties, intrigues, concessions and subterfuges (assassinations not excluded), with force and annexation where necessary.

The outstanding example of the latter was the Anglo-Mughal War (1686-90) in which the Company sought enlarged trading rights across the empire. The British blockaded several Mughal ports on the western coast of India, captured Mughal trading ships, and engaged the Mughal Army in battle. In return, the emperor seized all the factories and arrested members of the Company. They reached settlement in due course.

In the 18 Century, wars in Europe, in which the British and French were on opposite sides, spilled over into India, where the local rulers were quick to draw in the opposing parties as allies against the other. The French, late comers, had ambitions to enlarge their Indian empire.

Carnatic Wars

In the South, The Carnatic Wars, t (1740-48) were essentially between the British and the French, and took place together with the Austrian Succession War in Europe.

French military strength in India was significant, including sepoys (Indian soldiers). However, they struggled to maintain their presence due to a less robust supply chain compared to the British.

The British Royal Navy was more powerful, enabling them to control sea lanes and reinforce their forces in India. The French East India Company was also not as financially strong as the British East India Company, leading to shortages of funds and supplies during the wars.

The French held key territories like Pondicherry, which was their main base of operations. The French had fewer major bases compared to the British, making them more vulnerable if their key territories were captured. The British could draw upon resources from their other strongholds like Madras, Bombay and Calcutta, as well as reinforcements from Europe.

The wars established the Madras Presidency and the British position firmly in the South, with Fort George as their commanding power centre.

Battle of Plassey

The situation In the East was more of a potboiler. Since 1717, under three generations of able rulers, the Nawabs of Bengal had become the de facto independent ruler of the three provinces of Subah Bengal, corresponding today to the Indian states of West Bengal, Bihar and Orissa AND the entire sovereign nation of Bangladesh.

The first implemented administrative and economic reforms, including a new revenue system and promotion of trade, effectively laying the foundation for an independent state. From 1740, Alivardi Khan, a capable military commander, seized power, further solidifying Bengal's autonomy and establishing a new dynasty. Bengal had become a formidable power.

The land was peaceful and productive, and the people well-off and able to respond to the increasing demand for raw materials for export to Europe.

The Nawabs of Bengal in fact oversaw a period of "proto-industrial" development, ie pre-production of goods for industrial manufacture. The Bengal-Bihar-Orissa triangle became a major production centre for cotton muslin cloth, silk cloth, shipbuilding, gunpowder, saltpetre, and metalworks. Factories were set up in cities, towns, and ports.

The region became the stamping ground for foreign companies seeking to snap up supplies. The British, French, Dutch, the Danish and the Portuguese, among others, all had factories in Bengal.

Urbanisation and trade intensified, the economy was booming, and there was a whole lot of loose money floating about. Bengal became the contributor of the largest share of funds to the imperial treasury in Delhi. The Nawabs became the financial backbone of the Mughal court.

And it is not difficult to understand why the British staked their interest and had Fort William at Calcutta as their bastion, nor that the French did the same at their the factory-town of Chandernagore not too far away. With recent events in the Carnatic, it is not difficult to understand there should be one Nawab very nervy about Bengal becoming another Madras.

We reel into the events related to the Battle of Plessey with the assumption of office, in April 1756, as Nawab, of **Siraj-hud-Daulah**, 23 years of age,, grandson of his revered predecessor, Allivardi Khan. History records that he was short tempered, short-sighted and threatened by rival groups.

It is not surprising the powerful Maratha empire from the Deccan had invaded the prosperous neighbouring Subah Bengal at least five times in the recent past, and the new Nawab started under a burden to to pay the them considerable annual taxes. The Mughal empire was also currently under attack at Delhi by the Durrani empire of Afghanistan (as well as the Marathas) , and he was obliged to send a significant proportion of his armed forces to defend Delhi.

The new Nawab therefore had a genuine fear that he did not have forces to handle all the threats to his realm. He was particularly suspicious of the large profits made by the European companies in India. As it was, the British (ie servants of the Company) , who were the most powerful foreign group, were blatantly ignoring and breaking the local rules and restrictions imposed on them in their scramble for profits. The situation was getting out of control.

And as fate would have it, there was another war in Europe, and the French and English were on opposite sides again. And worse, both sides started building up their local fortifications The new Nawab's first action was to order them to stop. The French did so. The British did not. On 18-20 Jun 1756, the Nawab attacked the British at Calcutta and captured Fort William. On the following night, he (or his faction) placed 146 British officers and men in the historically infamous "Black Hole of Calcutta" at Fort William (suitable for about 6 people) and only 23 came out alive the following day. This became the obvert reason for the Battle of Plassey. . Meanwhile, the Nawab's army and navy were busy plundering the city of Calcutta and the other British factories in the surrounding areas.

When the Madras Presidency heard of the above in Aug 1756, they sent a retaliatory force under the command of Robert Clive, who duly re-captured Calcutta and Fort William in January 1757. For good measure, Clive went on to capture Chandannagar. The protagonists then marshalled themselves for the showdown.

They did so on the banks of the Hooghly in Bengal, at Palashi (Plassey) in the Battle of Plassey, fought on June 23, 1757. The records suggest that the Nawab mustered some 50,000 men-at-arms. It included a relatively small French component of artillery support. The records indicate The British sided mustered 3,000 men.

Clive won the battle by subterfuge. Clive formed a secret alliance with Mir Jafar, the Nawab's commander, promising him the throne in exchange for support against Siraj-ud-daulah.

When the battle was joined, the latter's army failed to engage. When the Nawab saw the betrayal, he fled the field. Clive walked off the battleground with the whole semi-continent of Bengal as his prize and Mir Jafar as the new Nawab.

This battle, although not a large-scale military engagement, significantly impacted the course of Indian history, marking a major step towards British colonial rule.

Battle of Buxar

Robert Clive was a lieutenant-colonel in the armed forces of the British East India Company, not the Queen. Yet, after Plassey, with Mir Jaffar as Nawab, he had taken over physical control of Subah Bengal.. As examples of the benefits, Mir Jafar handed over the districts of Midnapore, Burdwan and Chittagong to the English for the maintenance of their army . The English were also permitted duty-

free trade in Bengal, except for a duty of two percent on salt. At the same time, the state was very much in place. Their general and armed forces were still all there.

From 1760 to 1763, his son-in-law, Mir Qasim took over as the Nawab of Bengal. The British East India Company had several problems with him. Among other things Mir Qasim tried to abolish the exemptions from duties and taxes that the British had been granted.

The Battle of Buxar, fought on October 22, 1764, was a decisive conflict between the forces of the British East India Company and a combined alliance of Indian rulers led by Mir Qasim, the Nawab of Bengal; Shuja-ud-Daula, the Nawab of Awadh; and the Mughal Emperor Shah Alam II.

The British were led by Major Hector Munro and the force engaged in the fighting numbered 17,072 comprising 1,859 British regulars, 5,297 Indian sepoys and 9,189 Indian cavalry. The alliance army's numbers were estimated to be over 40,000, but they were still defeated.

Unlike the battle of Plassey, which was more of a British conspiracy, the battle of Buxar was a full-fledged war which established the British prowess in warfare. The importance of this battle lay in the fact that not only the Nawab of Bengal but also the Mughal Emperor of India was defeated by the British.

The battle resulted in the 1765 Treaty of Allahabad, in which the Mughal Emperor surrendered the sovereignty of Bengal to the British. Lord Robert Clive, the victor at Plassey, became the first governor of Bengal.

The British victory at Buxar ensured that there were no significant forces left to challenge its position in the eastern part of the subcontinent. The defeat of the Nawab of Awadh created a buffer state which effectively created a wall between the British and the notorious Marathas.

After his defeat, the Mughal emperor granted the Company the right to the "collection of Revenue" in the provinces of Bengal, Bihar and Orissa, known as "Diwani".

After the turn of the 19th century, the Company began what became two decades of accelerated expansion of Company territories. This was achieved either by subsidiary alliances with local rulers or by direct military annexation. The subsidiary alliances created the princely states of the Hindu maharajas and the Muslim nawabs.

Needless to say, a trading company had now grown into a position to raise an army superior to any other on the sub-continent, capable of taking control (indeed conquer) of India.

Company Expansion and Conquest

Following the Battle of Buxar, the British East India Company significantly expanded its control over India. This expansion involved a combination of military conquests, political manoeuvring, and economic control, culminating in direct British rule over much of the Indian subcontinent. See the following time-line:

.1757: Battle of Plassey. The British defeated the Nawab of Bengal, marking a crucial turning point in British power in India.

.1764: Battle of Buxar: This victory further solidified British control, granting them revenue rights in Bengal, Bihar, and Orissa.

. Late 18th Century. Carnatic Wars and Anglo-Mysore Wars. These conflicts expanded the Madras Presidency and increased British influence in South India.

. 1773 British Regulatory Act 1773. The British East India Company began to directly administer her growing Indian territories under British government supervision.

. 1784 British Pitt's India Act. Introduced various refinements to the preceding, and clearly divided the Company's responsibilities into commercial and political.

.1813 British East India Company Act . Charter Act 1813. Ended the monopoly exclusively to trade with India (except in tea and opium). Asserted British sovereignty over company's Indian territories, initiated education for Indians, and permitted Christian missionaries.

- . **Early 19th Century.** Anglo-Maratha Wars. These wars expanded the Bombay Presidency and brought more of India under British control.
- . **1843: Annexation of Sind.** This added to the Bombay Presidency.
- . **1849: Anglo-Sikh Wars and Annexation of Punjab.** This brought the Punjab region under British rule.
- . **1857: Indian Mutiny (Sepoy Mutiny).** This revolt led to the end of Company rule and the establishment of the British Raj, wherein the British Crown directly ruled India.
- . **1858-1947: The British Raj:** Direct British rule continued for almost a century, impacting all aspects of Indian life.

Company Economic Exploitation

The British East India Company was basically a joint-stock mercantilist enterprise, whose raison d'être ultimately was profit. It therefore implemented economic policies whether or not at the expense of Indian industries and agriculture.

Raw cotton was imported without tariffs from India to British factories. The factories manufactured textiles from Indian cotton and sold them back to the Indian market. British economic policies gave them a monopoly over India's large market and cotton resources.

Imports such as silk and cotton were brought from India and turned into expensive clothes and fabrics before being sold at a higher price back in India. The profits made by the East India Company were invested in Britain. Factory owners in particular earned a lot of money from trade with India.

The first recorded history of opium cultivation in India in the 15th century refers to Khambhat and Malwa as the places where it was grown. During the Mughal Empire, opium was grown extensively and was an important article of trade with China and other eastern countries.

The British acquired an insatiable demand for tea, imported from China. To rectify the trade imbalance, the East India Company and other British merchants began to import Indian opium into China illegally, demanding payment in silver. This was then used to buy tea and other goods. By 1839, opium sales to China paid for the entire British tea trade.

The British began exporting Indian opium in 1773. That same year, they became the leading suppliers of the Chinese market, as was their intention. In-deed, opium soon became one of the most valuable and profitable commodities for the British.

British Conquest of India

First British Government Intervention

The very first arrangements after Plassey were not hard to figure out. The Company took over the taxes, while the Nawab continued to run the country, including the local armed forces – provided he did what he was asked and shut his eye when he was told. The Company had taken on a political role with no accountability, and its officers were not subject to codes of public office.

The Regulating Act of 1773 was the British Parliament's first step toward controlling and recognising the East India Company's political and administrative functions in India. The Company was in financial crisis, culminating in a demand for a £1 million loan in 1772. There was a need to define the relationship between the Company and the British government, and there was widespread criticism of the Company's governance in Bengal and the unethical practices of its officials.

The 1773 Act re-structured the administration into the Presidencies of Madras and Bombay each under a Governor-in-Council, and the Presidency of Bengal headed by a Governor-General (in Council) in overall charge of all three presidencies. A Supreme Court was established in Calcutta (1774) with its first Chief Justice.

The India Act of 1784, also known as "Pitt's India Act" further clearly separated the Company's commercial and political responsibilities, introducing a "dual system" of responsibility. A Court of

Directors of the Company managed commerce, while the newly established Board of Control oversaw political affairs under the authority of the British government. Servants of the Company were prohibited from engaging in private trade or accepting bribes. The Court of Directors was required to report on the Company's revenue and military affairs in India. In this Act, for the first time, the territories of India under the Company were referred to as "British possessions".

The Sepoy Mutiny-Indian Rebellion 1857-8

The Sepoy Mutiny-Indian Rebellion was a major uprising in India in 1857–58 against the rule of the British East India Company which functioned as a sovereign power on behalf of the British Crown.

The sepoys were Indian soldiers who were recruited into the Company's army. Just before the rebellion, there were over 300,000 sepoys in the army, compared to about 50,000 British. The East India Company's forces were divided into three Presidency armies. The Bengal army recruited higher castes, such as Brahmins, Rajputs and Bhumihs, mostly from the Awadh and Bihar regions and even restricted the enlistment of lower castes in 1855. In contrast, the Madras Army and the Bombay Army were "more localised, caste-neutral armies" that "did not prefer high-caste men". The domination of higher castes in the Bengal Army has been blamed in part for initial mutinies that led to the rebellion.

Another source states that, by 1824, the size of the combined armies of Bengal, Madras, and Bombay was about 200,000 and had at least 170 sepoy and 16 European regiments. In 1844 the combined average strength of the three armies was 235,446 native and 14,584 European.

The rebellion began on 10 May 1857 in the form of a mutiny of sepoys of the company's Bengal Army in the garrison town of Meerut, 40 miles (64 km) northeast of Delhi. It then erupted into other mutinies and civilian rebellions chiefly in the upper Gangetic plain and central India though incidents of revolt also occurred farther north and east.

The rebellion posed a military threat to British power in that region, and was contained only with the rebels' defeat in Gwalior on 20 June 1858. On 1 November 1858, the British granted amnesty to all rebels not involved in murder, though they did not declare the hostilities to have formally ended until 8 July 1859.

Causes of Revolt of 1857

The 1857 revolt was caused by a number of factors, chief among them the increasing power of the British East India Company and the resentment it bred in Indian subjects. The company's monopoly on trade, its exemption from taxation, and its ever-growing landholdings created great inequality and injustice. In addition, British policies such as Annexation and the Doctrine of Lapse further angered Indians.

The Indian rebellion was fed by resentments born of diverse perceptions, including invasive British-style social reforms, harsh land taxes, summary treatment of some rich landowners and princes, and scepticism about British claims that their rule offered material improvement to the Indian economy.

. Policy of Annexation. One of the main reasons was the policy of annexation pursued by the British. This policy led to the annexation of several native states, which made the people feel that their rights were being usurped.

. Doctrine of Lapse. The Doctrine of Lapse introduced in 1843 was another major cause. It allowed the British to annex any native state whose ruler died without a male heir. This led to great unrest among the people, as they felt that their rights were being snatched away.

. Discrimination against Indians. The British favoured Europeans over Indians in all aspects of life, which led to a feeling of resentment among the people

. Economic Policies. The economic policies of the British contributed to the outbreak of the revolt. The tax policies and other measures adopted by the British led to economic hardship for the people, which made them resentful of British rule.

. **Cartilages.** The introduction of greased cartridges was the immediate cause of the revolt. The cartridges used in the new Enfield rifles had to be greased with tallow, which is a substance derived from animal fat. This led to great resentment among the Hindu and Muslim soldiers, as they felt that this was against their religious beliefs. This factor triggered off the revolt which stirred up the others causes.

Aftermath of the Revolt

The revolt of 1857 was a turning point in the history of India. It showed the people of India that they could unitedly challenge British rule and also inspired future generations to fight for independence.

The revolt also led to a number of changes in British policy, which made the people feel that their rights were being safeguarded.

Many Indians rose against the British; however, many also fought for the British, and the majority remained seemingly compliant to British rule. Violence, which sometimes betrayed exceptional cruelty, was inflicted on both sides: on British officers and civilians, including women and children, by the rebels, and on the rebels and their supporters, including sometimes entire villages, by British reprisals.

After the outbreak of the mutiny in Meerut, the rebels quickly reached Delhi, whose 81-year-old Mughal ruler was declared the Emperor of Hindustan.

The East India Company's response came rapidly as well, and Delhi was re-taken by the end of September. However, it then took the better part of 1858 for the rebellion to be suppressed

Other regions such as the Madras Presidency remained largely calm. In the Punjab, the Sikh princes and many of the large princely states, did not join the rebellion, serving the British as "breakwaters in a storm".

India was thereafter administered directly by the British government in the new British Raj/ On 1 November 1858, Queen Victoria issued a proclamation to Indians, which while lacking the authority of a constitutional provision, promised rights similar to those of other British subjects. In the following decades, when admission to these rights was not always forthcoming, Indians were to pointedly refer to the Queen's proclamation in growing avowals of a new nationalism.

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British Raj

Government of India Act 1858

The rebellion led to the dissolution of the East India Company, and forced the British to reorganise the army, the financial system, and the administration in India, through passage of the Government of India Act 1858.

The principal changes were:

- . 1.The East India Company was liquidated. The Indian territories of Britain were to be governed in the name of the British Queen.
- . 2 This act made India a direct British colony. The powers of the Company's Court of Directors were vested with a new Secretary of State for India. Via the Secretary of State, the British parliament could ask questions regarding Indian affairs.
- . 3 The representative of the British government in India was the Governor-General and Viceroy (both the same person to avoid conflict).
- . 4 It was decided that the remaining Indian princes and chiefs (more than 560 in number) would have their independent status provided they accept British suzerainty.

. 5 The Indian Civil Services was to be instituted for the administration of the country. There was provision for Indians also to be admitted to the service.

While British colonial rule in India brought some advancements in infrastructure and education, it also led to significant economic exploitation and social disruption. Positive aspects included the introduction of railways, improved communication systems, and the establishment of modern institutions. However, these developments often served British interests and contributed to the impoverishment of Indian industries and agriculture.

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Colonial Economics

1. The first phase (1757-1813) of 'mercantilism' was that of direct plunder, the second phase (1813-1858) was that of free trade and the third phase (1858 onwards) was that of financial imperialism.

The basic principle in colonial economics is maximum profit for the colonial power. The general formula is to extract raw materials from the colonies for industrial development at home (bought at suppressed prices), and marketing the manufactured products back in the colonies (at as high prices as the market will bear), generating as much value-added as possible as profit..

Investment by the colonial power would be generally confined to providing the infrastructure to facilitate and maximise the profit. The locals are left to participate in the benefits of the economic changes, but with minimal societal development as such for them, unless generally also necessary for colonial economics.

Inevitably, the colonial power introduces various modernisations and environmental improvements, which do benefit the country overall. In some situations, the colonial power gets involved in shifting segments of the population for better employment prospects, including overseas.

Over time, the emphasis on the different products change and the distribution of resources alters. At a late stage, the productive components of an industry may be relocated as between the colony, the home country and even a third location, according to their differential economics. Raw materials may also be imported, and markets even reversed.

In these late stages, the colonial power may introduce social and skill development to raise the people to required levels of productivity, not unlikely necessary to maintain stability, as also due to international humanitarian pressure.

The above principles apply to different products in different ways, according to the changing technology and markets. We shall see these factors across our quick review of selected happenings in colonial India.

British colonialism in India coincided with the Industrial Revolution, and played a significant role in the latter, particularly in the industrialisation of the cotton textile industry, which at that stage was the lead manufacturing sector.

During the Industrial Revolution, the British did export iron ore from India to England, although it was not a primary export. India also possessed significant coal deposits with high thermal value, but exports to Britain were negligible.

The main focus of the British was on importing raw cotton for the textile industry. They did also deal in and develop other cash and plantation crop industries like jute, tea, sugarcane, and at one stage opium. We shall focus on cotton, for it turns out to be a many sided story

The Cotton Story

The cotton story is a complete saga in the global economic exploitation of colonial possessions during the imperial empire days preceding World War II. The Indian cotton story is the classic world case, and I make no apology for giving it in some detail.

To avoid confusion, “cotton” means raw cotton in bales and can include spun yarn. The term “textile” can cover products using other raw materials than cotton, but here we confine it to finished products manufactured from cotton, whether in bales of cloth or garments.

There are four distinct parts to the industry: (i) the growing and production of raw cotton, (ii) the manufacture of cotton textiles (iii) the marketing of textile products, and (iv) the transport and other services to support the preceding.

There have been four stages of evolution in India: (a) the historic industry, (b) pre-colonial industry, (c) the pre-industrial industry, (d) the industrial revolution, and (e) the modern era.

The Historic Period

Cotton had been cultivated and used by humans for thousands of years, with evidence of cotton fabrics dating back to ancient civilisations in India, Egypt, and Peru.

In this phase, the plant, which harvests every 6 months, was historically grown as part of village mixed farms or in smallholdings. The cotton bolls were harvested by the villagers themselves, and then “ginned”²⁰ by them in the villages to produce raw cotton. The latter were next delivered to the artisans and craftsmen in the towns, who spun it into yarn, weaved the latter into fabrics, dyed them, and finally sewed them into useable products. Volume was low, quality was the value factor; and cotton apparel became exotic. They were carried by passing travellers to distant and select markets.

The history of the cotton industry in India dates back millennia. India had been an exporter of fine cotton fabrics since ancient times. In fact India held a global monopoly over the manufacturing of cotton textiles for about 3,000 years - from 1500 BC to 1500 AD.

Pre-Colonial period (13th-16th Centuries)

Before the British arrived in India in 1608, the Mughal empire was the world leader in the manufacture of colourful cotton fabrics. Sources such as Marco Polo in the 13th century and Chinese travellers to Buddhist pilgrim centres in India even earlier, praised the superiority of Indian fabrics.

The handheld roller gin or “churka” had been used in India since the 6th century, and was then introduced to other countries from there. Between the 12th and 14th centuries, dual-roller gins appeared in India and China. The Indian version of the dual-roller gin was prevalent throughout the Mediterranean cotton trade by the 16th century. This mechanical device was, in some areas, driven by water power. The incorporation of the crank handle in the churka first appeared in India sometime during the late Delhi Sultanate or the early Mughal Empire.

Development of European Market

The demand for cotton clothes started to rise in the European urban markets during the Renaissance and Enlightenment. This demand was fuelled by both by the growing affluence of the aristocracy and a burgeoning middle class.

Cotton manufacture was introduced to Europe during the Muslim conquest. The knowledge of cotton weaving was spread to northern Italy in the 12th century. The spinning wheel was introduced to Europe around 1350. By the 15th century, several cities were important ports for the cotton trade: namely the sale and transportation of cotton fabrics, and increasingly imports of raw cotton,

²⁰ - “gin” is the industry term for “engine”, in this case simple tools, see further on

However, the main problem was that cotton was did not grow in Europe, and only trickled in by land via the Middle East.

Expansion of Mughal Cotton

in the immediate pre-colonial period, the total supply of raw cotton in Mughal India came from mixed farms and smallholdings. There was no cotton plantation agriculture. And most of this supply went to the local manufacture of cotton cloths and fabrics within the cottage industry setting. There were no factories demanding raw cotton for input into manufacturing and therefore little was marketed and available for export.

The output of the cottage industry was sold in the local market places, from which overseas traders picked their supplies to ship abroad, including the British East India Company. There must have also been specialised vendors and local distributors working these market places, serving the urban and pan-Indian cotton textile demand, and these would have been used as sourcing networks.

Shortly before the Mughal era, the introduction of the spinning wheel across India increased productivity, lowered the costs of yarn, and thereby expanded production. During the early 16th century to the early 18th century, Indian cotton production further increased, in terms of both raw cotton and cotton textiles.

The Mughals introduced agrarian reforms such as a new revenue system in favour of higher value cash crops. Production of piece goods continued to predominate, including calicos and muslins, available unbleached and in a variety of colours. India had a 25% share of the global textile trade in the early 18th century.

The most important centre of cotton production was the Bengal Subah province, particularly around its capital city of Dhaka. Bengali cotton textiles were exported in large quantities to Europe, Indonesia and Japan. In the early 18th century, Indian textiles had a 38% share of the West African trade, while Indian calicos were a major force in Europe, and Indian textiles accounted for 20% of total English trade with Southern Europe. Bengal Subah province alone accounted for 40% of Dutch imports from Asia.

From the late 17th century to the early 18th century, Mughal India accounted for 95% of British imports from Asia, substantially cotton. The British East India Company made its fortune from providing much if not almost all of the transport.

The British East India Company Period (1608 – 1858)

The British East India Company (BEIC), a joint-stock trading company, arrived in 1608 in search of profit. Initially, the trade was driven by spices, but they quickly expanded to include cotton, silk, indigo dye, and saltpetre (a compound for making gun powder.)

At first they brought back to Europe some pieces of cotton textiles to test the market. Soon, they realised this was indeed the “white gold” of India, the Mughal empire the prime source, and there was a growing demand in Europe for both cotton textiles and raw cotton. Cotton became their major interest and progressively generator of profit. It is said that the British East India Company became the prime factor in generating the European market.

The “factories” set up by the British in India focused on trading in commodities. These factories served as trading posts and warehouses, facilitating internal collection and the growing trade between India and other parts of the world.

The Company set up 23 “factories” in all, located in the three Presidencies of Madras, Bombay and Bengal. The bigger ones became fortresses as well, from which the British exerted their economic, political and even military influence.

The Company’s operating objective was to procure and export as much of the local cotton goods as available, both finished goods and raw materials. And, as the need of Britain’s burgeoning industrial

revolution asserted itself, the Company fell into a strategy to induce farmers switch to cotton growing to generate an exportable supply of raw cotton.

During this period, the quantities of the Indian outputs of both finished goods and raw cotton would increase, but the composition of the output would be the same. India still dominated the finished cotton goods markets in Britain, to the extent that British introduced the Calico Act, 1721.

Industrial Revolution

From the mid-17th Century, with the integration of the world economy as one, several lines of societal development converged. The improving standards of living and the population explosions demanded a widening range of basic necessities, of improving practicality and quality, more rapidly and more affordable. These included clothing and apparel, and leading in popularity was cotton textiles.

Scale now mattered. Products had to be mass produced, no longer individually. At this point, man's facultative advances into the scientific age enabled the invention of new machine-based technologies and enhanced sources of power. And then, man made the further quantum leap of developing the factory system to string these together. Voila, we had the industrial Revolution. And at the front-line, leading the revolution was the cotton textile industry

The inputs of raw materials and labour for mass production had to be greatly amplified and drawn from wider sources. Likewise, the higher volume of outputs demanded new and re-organised marketing strategies and transport infrastructure.

Manchester.

And, leading the cotton textile Industrial Revolution was England, and therein Manchester.. The latter had begun production of textiles from 1363, with the first Flemish settlers. Naturally attracting the industry because of its favourable climate, locational advantages and physical resources. Manchester forged ahead to respond to the enlarging scale of demand. England led in other sectors of the Industrial Revolution, which boosted the textile industry

Technological advances and the factory system took over. The Fly Shuttle was invented in 1733, and the Spinning Jenny, the Water Frame, and the Spinning Mule were invented between 1760 and 1790, all enabling large-scale production. Other key inventions included the steam engine, which enabled new forms of transport and re-location to urban areas. The first steam mill fired up in 1783. Manchester was "steam mill mad" by 1800, meaning widespread adoption of new machinery.

The application of James Watt's steam power to textile production in the 1790s allowed for a significant boost in manufacturing. The development of canals provided efficient transport for raw materials and finished goods, with Manchester connected to Liverpool by 1776, facilitating import-export activities.

19th Century Dominance of British Cotton Manufacturing

By 1800, the amount of cotton spun by Manchester had risen to 56 million pounds, a substantial increase from 5 million pounds in 1781. It accounted for two-thirds of British cotton cloth exported.

In 1794–1796, British cotton goods accounted for 15.6% of Britain's exports, and in 1804–1806 grew to 42.3%.

The Lancashire Cotton Famine (1861–1865), was a depression in the industry brought about by overproduction, at a time of contracting world markets. It coincided with the severe supply disruptions of the American Civil War.

The "cotton famine" led other countries like India and Egypt to significantly increase their cotton production, permanently diversifying the global supply.

The British cotton textile industry's peak annual output and export occurred during the mid and late 19th century, particularly in the mid- 1850s. Interestingly, this was about the time of the Indian Mutiny

and the Takeover of India by the British Crown in 1857-58. Britain produced around 8 billion yards of cloth per year, accounting for almost half of the world's total output. The British cotton trade stood at 80% of global cotton piece goods in the 1880s.

Slaves and the New World Cotton Industry

Virginia was first colonised in 1607. The original settlers planted a range of crops such as tobacco, sugarcane - and cotton. While the land was amenable to cash crop and large-scale plantation agriculture, they soon found their limit was the shortage of labour.

The next development was the transatlantic slave trade. The first slaves arrived in Virginia in 1619. By the War of Independence in 1776, the 13 British colonies had some 450,000 slaves, out of the total population of the 13 colonies, which was roughly 2.5 million.

None of the thirteen English colonies specialised in cotton growing because the demand for raw cotton had to yet built up. Virginians were cultivating and hand-spinning cotton for domestic use, while their primary product was tobacco.

The Cotton Belt

The Cotton Belt did not take shape until after the War of Independence (1775-83). It would be triggered by the demand for raw cotton created by Manchester. The above take-off was enabled by the invention of the mechanical cotton gin in 1793 by Eli Whitney which made cotton cultivation significantly more profitable. The forced removal of Native American tribes opened up vast tracts of fertile land in the South. The early states included Alabama and Louisiana.

The industry's productivity was further boosted by the invention in 1820 of Petit Gulf cotton, a hybrid developed by Rush Hutt in Mississippi. It proved more resistant than the green seed cotton from Georgia, less likely to harbor diseases and rot. Moreover, it was easier to pick with a human hand.

The Cotton Belt States included Alabama, Louisiana, Mississippi, Texas, Tennessee, Arkansas, North Carolina, South Carolina, Florida – and Virginia. It would extend west of the Mississippi river in time.

Raw cotton was first exported to Europe (Manchester mainly) from the Southern United States (specifically from the Cotton Belt) from the late 18th Century, after the War of Independence. Slavery would only be abolished in 1865 - a century further down the road. During this interim period, the importation of slaves from Africa constituted the primary source of manpower for cotton growing.

European textile manufacturers (again mainly Manchester at this stage) increasingly depended on American slave grown cotton to fuel their growing industries, generating huge profits.

After 1807, the Cotton Belt states did not directly import enslaved people but they imported them from the Upper South through a massive **domestic slave trade**. The demand was met by moving enslaved people from older states, like Virginia, to new plantations in Mississippi, Alabama, and Louisiana.

By 1860, just before the Civil War, the US output was over 2 billion pounds of cotton a year, about 75% of the world's cotton supply, all sold internationally.

During the American Civil War (1861-65) the supply of cotton from the Southern Cotton Belt to Europe dropped dramatically, from 3 million bales in 1860 to mere thousands by the end of the war, representing a nearly 100% decrease in export volume. This precipitated the Lancashire cotton famine. It also coincided with the British political takeover of India from the Company, as a colony.

British Control of the Indian Cotton Textile Industry

Post-Mughal era

The decline of the Mughal Empire led to problems of aggregate supply for Indian manufactured goods. The fragmentation of the Empire resulting in power vacuums that resulted in wars, raiding,

looting, tax farming, increased transportation costs, and as a result grain prices, and nominal wages, increasing manufactured goods prices.

A number of the succeeding entities, like the Maratha empire established new industrial bases across the region to serve military and naval. These industrial centres thrived until their sponsors were defeated, by the East India Company over a series of wars.

The period from 1780 to 1860 saw a dynamic shift in India's economy from a world leading processed goods exporter to the extraction and export of raw materials to Britain and buyer of manufactured goods from Britain. The leading export of fine cotton silk was shifted to colonially extracted raw materials including opium, indigo and raw cotton.

Company Rule

The Company Rule in India refers to areas which were under the rule of the British East India Company, which began to substantively rule (as against just trade in) following the founding of the Bengal Residency in 1765 and the Battle of Buxar in 1763.

This period involved protectionist policies applied within Company territory restricting or tariffing the sale of Indian manufactured goods and force-marketing British cotton manufactures instead.

At the same time, a 10% tariff was imposed on East Indian Company textile imports into England from 1685, and doubled to 20% in 1690.

In 1698, the Calico Acts were enacted restricting the importation of printed Indian textiles to England, with similar legislation in the form of the Duties on East India Goods Act 1707 applied in Scotland.

On the other hand, the Company continued to enjoy a monopoly on all British trade (with India presumably) in either direction, from its 1661 charter revision until 1813.

Imports of calicoes, cheap cotton fabrics known as Calicut, from India found a mass market among the poor. By the 18th century, the middle class had become more concerned with cleanliness and fashion, and there was a demand for these easily washable and colourful fabrics.

By 1721 these calicoes threatened British manufacturers, and Parliament passed the Calico Act that banned calicoes for clothing or domestic purposes. In 1774 the act was repealed with the invention of machines that allowed for British manufacturers to compete with Eastern fabrics. Indian cotton textiles, particularly those from Bengal continued to maintain a competitive advantage up until the 19th century.

The British reduced costs substantially below the previously imported Indian handicrafts and the import of cheap and in part higher quality, long-staple American cotton.

Between 1671 and 1813 the East India Company held a monopoly on English, and later British, trade with the Indies, the Company being able to control what goods were traded into its territories, as well as exported. Access to the Company's territories for the new British manufactured textiles was demanded. By the Charter Act 1813, the abolition of the Company's monopoly on British trade in the Indies opened access to the Indian markets to imported British manufactured goods, while asserting British sovereignty for the first time.

Devoid of international competition and innovation, the Mughal cotton industry stagnated at the turn of the 18th century, and began losing ground to European industry

In addition the East India company undertook a programme of works, including the construction of new ports, the metalling of roads, including the ancient Grand Trunk Road, the digging of canals, and the establishment of the first railways to enable, and reduce the cost, and time necessary, to both import and export goods

Britain's preferential trade policies resulted in Britain initially gaining control over first the Indian export market and then the domestic market as well. India's post-1810 deindustrialisation followed the pattern seen worldwide as a result of European colonial occupation.

The Colonial Period (1858-1947)

British Cotton Industry

The British Cotton Industry (now Lancashire and Yorkshire, not just Manchester), having led industrialisation, still dominated the industry in terms of textile exports. Having peaked at mid-Century, its cotton textile industry continued to expand. In 1871, exports accounted for 60% of total sales.

Figures for exact point to point growth and distribution of exports by countries are both unavailable without in depth research. One source suggests that exports to India reached 19.4% in 1873, with the top other countries including Australia, China and Other European countries; USA was not included.

Figures for imports of raw cotton by countries are also unavailable without in depth research. A much quote figure, on which we too must rely is that it would peak at one billion tonnes of raw cotton consumed in 1914.

Another source gives Britain's raw cotton imports peaked in the period from 1912 to 1914, with an average annual import of 2,132 million pounds.

For our purposes, the British cotton textile industry continued to grow and needed both raw cotton supplies and export markets during this second colonial period.

Continued US Raw Cotton Supply

By the mid-1870s, after the Civil War, the South's cotton output recovered to prewar levels. America regained its position as the world's leading producer of cotton. But now, nearly 40% percent was raised by white farmers. Most of the output went to Britain.

The **boll weevil** spread northward from Mexico during the 1890s. Within a few years, boll weevil damage affected crops throughout the cotton-growing states of the Deep South.

By 1922 it was taking 8% of the cotton in the country annually. This failure of the south's primary crop became a major impetus for the first of the Great Migrations of African Americans to the Northern States.

US cotton output peaked in 1914 at 2.8 million bales, but this plummeted to 600,000 bales in 1923 due to the boll weevil.

A substantial recovery did not occur until a Boll Weevil Eradication Program was implemented, completing in 1990, after which production increased dramatically. Cotton today is mainly machine harvested. An estimated at around 30% of the total is still manually harvested.

The USA today is the fourth biggest producer of raw cotton, and the biggest exporter. The US exported approximately 12.3 million bales of cotton in 2023-2024. The exports of cotton ranked as the 38th most exported product (out of 97) in the United States.

In 2024, the main destinations of United States' cotton exports were: China (\$1.49B), Pakistan (\$772M), Honduras (\$633M), Vietnam (\$582M), and Mexico (\$424M).

Control of Indian Cotton Industry

From 1858 until 1947, the Indian economy was controlled directly under British imperial rule (British Raj). The economic policies implemented by the Company were continued and caused a severe decrease in all sectors of the Indian economy.

The period between 1775 and 1800 saw dramatic technological developments in the English textile industry, which increased their total output and reduced the costs. British cotton was at this stage being produced in surplus quantity by using sophisticated machinery. The primary need was markets.

The British policy was to dump this output on the huge Indian market, where however it faced competition from indigenous cotton producers. The parallel policy was to undermine the latter and throttle the Indian cotton industry.

In 1860 Britain imposed a 10 percent customs duty on all goods produced in India (officially to help clear the war debt.) This commodity duty applied to Indian goods, while British finished products were largely exempt from duties when imported into India. This duty was reduced in 1864 and 1875. The prices of British cotton goods had also reduced significantly, but still dominated the market.

This led to flooding of the colonial market and to a decline in the indigenous cotton industry, and the domestic activities associated with the production of Indian cotton fell. The fall of the Indian cotton industry is one of the important factors behind the decline of Indian GDP under British rule.

The fall in the hegemony of Mughals reduced the overall productivity of agriculture and reduced the supply of grain. This rise in prices led to a rise in the nominal wages.. The increased competition from British cotton and rising nominal wages reduced the profitability of the cotton industry of India.

Some of the causes during that period were

. 1 Introduction of machine made goods in the Indian subcontinent at a cheaper rate, which led to the decline of the traditional (handloom) textile industry of India.

.2 . Local producers were subject to a tax (3-10%) on their goods in the local markets (on an equal footing with those British imports that were subject to the same) .

.3 The tariff policy under which British goods entered India duty free or with nominal duty payment, while Indian exporters had to pay high taxes on export goods to Britain.

.4 Adverse changes in the market place and social conditions engineered by the British resulted in consistent decline in manufacturing employment that required access to raw materials and natural resources.

.5 British rule resulted in the loss of powers of the craftsmen organisation and other bodies that used to supervise and regulate the quality of the local industry

.6 The loss of Mughal court culture and urban aristocrats resulted in decreased demand for these handicrafts

.7 The Indian economy suffered deflation. which directly impacted villagers' purchasing power and forced wages up.

The price of cotton decreased by more than a third in the 1900s as compared to the level in 1800. The fall in prices of cotton further reduced the productivity of the Indian cotton industry

Britain replaced India as the largest textile manufacturer in the world. By 1873, India: was a significant market for British cotton textiles, accounted for 19.4% of Britain's total cloth exports by value,

On the other hand, in 1831-35, British imports still made up only 3.9% of the total Indian consumption of cotton textiles. By 1880-1881, under the Raj, this proportion however had risen to 58.4%. Local. Industry was squashed

Supply of Indian Raw Cotton

Bombay and Calcutta became key ports for the export of raw cotton from India. The policy ensured that the growing demand for British textiles could be met by Indian raw materials, rather than finished Indian textiles.

During the American Civil War, India supplied a significant portion of Britain's raw cotton, providing 1,069,000 bales out of a total import of 1,133,000 bales in 1862. The reliance on Indian cotton diminished as the US resumed its role as the main cotton provider. Britain's overall reliance on imported cotton from all sources grew.

By 1914, the export of raw cotton from India to the UK was a well-established and vital part of the imperial economic relationship. It represented a continuation of historical trade patterns, where India's raw cotton production was essential for the British textile industry, which was then a cornerstone of Britain's global industrial power.

Nub of Colonial Economic Oppression

As a colonial power, Britain imposed policies ensuring that raw cotton from India was sent to Britain for processing, and the finished products were then sold back to the Indian market, making British cotton goods a significant part of Indian imports.

This policy crippled the traditional Indian craft industry, leaving Indian artisans and consumers with no choice but to pay taxes on their own locally produced goods and to buy expensive, imported English cloth.

Rather than taxing Indian cotton goods for revenue from Indians, the British actively dismantled the Indian textile industry.

British industrialists deliberately prevented the transfer of new textile technologies (and presumably capital investment) to India.

As their products became unsellable, weavers were forced to accept low wages, abandon their craft, or face destitution, leading to the virtual collapse of India's handloom industry.

This systematic dismantling transformed India from a world leader in cotton textiles into an importer of foreign goods and an exporter of raw materials, a profound economic reversal for the second largest population in the world.

Indian Cotton Textile Recovery

India's first mechanized textile mill was the Bombay Spinning and Weaving Company, founded by Cowasji Nanubhai Davar, in 1854 in Bombay. It marked the beginning of India's modern automated cotton textile industry. The company was designed by Sir William Fairbairn and first operated under the supervision of British engineers and skilled cotton operatives. It began the modern Indian cotton industry, which shifted production from traditional handlooms to mechanized processes and included both spinning and weaving. The growth of the Indian textile industry was driven by Indian capital and entrepreneurship.

The number of cotton mills in India rose from 58 in 1880 to 79 in 1883, 193 in 1900, and 271 in 1914. In World War 1, the British Indian Army (all voluntary enlistments) was larger than the British Army and was engaged in the West and Middle East. etc. The Indian textile industry experienced an enormous boom, supplying the local market as well the uniform, etc requirements of wartime.

Mahatma Gandhi's promotion of Swadeshi (see further on) in later years, promoting self-reliance and boycotting foreign goods, boosted Indian-made cloth sales to 62% by 1936 and 76% by 1945. His charkha (traditional portable hand-driven spinning wheel) initiative sought to make the locals self-reliant in spinning yarn, challenging not only British imports, but local manufactures as well.

By 1940, India had an estimated 377 modern cotton textile mill. and produced approximately 1.7 million tons of raw cotton and 1.2 billion yards of cotton fabric. World War II saw India drawn in by the British to the extent of 2.3 million troops (again voluntary) in the British Indian Army. There was total disruption in global trade, with the Indian cotton industry engaged in another boom supplying local consumption and military needs.

Footnote : Round-UP of the Cotton Story

The British raw cotton imports peaked in 1914 at almost a billion tonnes. The industry began to decline in the 20th century due to factors such as:

- Global competition: Other countries, like China, Japan and India, developed their own textile industries, reducing Britain's dominance.
- *World Wars:* The First and Second World Wars, while they resulted in (military) textile booms, also disrupted global trade. The war disrupted the supply of raw cotton

Whereas in 1950 it was still a significant export, with a large workforce and a substantial share of the UK's total export value, the cotton industry faced the beginnings of major structural change. It no longer had India.

This was also due to transference of technology and to production moving to countries where labour was cheaper. Cotton processing increasingly took place close to where the crop was grown.

Automation and changes in textile production methods also contributed to the shift in manufacturing. Increased competition from other countries and the rise of man-made fibres played a significant role in the industry's decline.

By 1933 Japan introduced 24-hour cotton production and became the world's largest cotton manufacturer.

The Indian swadeshi movement devastated Lancashire and over 800 mills closed in the inter-war years. By the 1980s, the textile industry of Britain had almost disappeared.

The demand for cotton has doubled since the 1980s. The main producer of cotton, as of December 2016, is India, at 26%, China at 20% and the United States at 16%.

The USA, still fighting the boll weevil, today is the fourth biggest producer of raw cotton, and the biggest exporter.

The top three cotton consumers are China, India, and Pakistan, which collectively account for around 60% of global cotton demand. China alone accounts for 30-35%, and India 20-30%. Among these countries, India is also the world's largest cotton producer and thus imports less American cotton.

Other Commercial Operations

Opium

The British East India Company obtained both control of both the Mughal opium monopoly and the revenue collection rights in Bengal after the Battle of Buxar in 1773. And, they began exporting opium to China. The British initially bought opium from local farmers and merchants but later directly controlled and encouraged opium poppy cultivation, forcing Indian farmers to switch from other crops like cotton to grow opium for the Company's profitable trade with China. The Company redirected populations to grow and manufacture opium baskets, for the China trade.

The British seized control of the opium trade with China not as a single event but through the First Opium War (1839-42) and the Second Opium War (1856-1860) after which China was forced to legalise and expand the trade – and hand over Hong Kong for the purpose.

The British ceased to supply China with opium as a result of a treaty signed in 1907. This treaty, agreed upon between Britain and China, aimed to eliminate Indian opium exports to China over a period of 10 years. By 1917, British exports of Indian opium to China had ceased in accordance with the terms of the treaty.

The Opium trade paid handsome profits, including the British pass for Tea. India was paid in Manchester cotton textiles but China paid Britain in silver.

Tea

India is one of the largest tea producers in the world, although over 70 per cent of its tea is consumed within India itself. A number of renowned teas, such as Assam and Darjeeling, also grow exclusively in India. The Indian tea industry has grown to own many global tea brands and has evolved into one of the most technologically equipped tea industries in the world. Tea production, certification, exportation and all facets of the tea trade in India are controlled by the Tea Board of India. From its legendary origins to modern processing techniques, tea production in India delicately weaves together cultural heritage, economic prowess, and technological advancement.

Colonial beginnings

It was not until after 1700 that the East India Company began to trade regularly with China and ordered tea for export, though not in large quantities. The tea trade was actually a side effect of the silk and textile trade, the most desired Chinese commodities of the time. In 1720, however, the British government banned the importation of finished Asian textiles, and traders began to focus on tea instead. This new focus marked a turning point for the British tea trade and is arguably why tea became more popular than coffee. Once the East India company focused on tea as its main import, tea soon attained price stability.

The Company began large-scale production of tea in Assam in 1837, where the first British tea garden was established. In 1840, the Assam Tea Company was established. By the turn of the century, Assam became the leading tea-producing region in the world. Tea became also widely grown in India as both a cash-crop and a mono-crop, turning farmers into industrialist agriculturists.

The practice of drinking tea daily and having it be an aspect of social status in Indian culture was entirely a result of British colonial influences.

The tea industry in British India mostly employed indentured-labour to work on large plantations. The majority of indentured laborers on Indian tea plantations were women who received less pay than male labourers.

From the outset, Indian-grown tea proved extremely popular among British consumers, both for its greater strength, and for its cheaper price. Tea had been a high-status drink when first introduced, but had steadily fallen in price and increased in popularity among the working class. Indian tea soon came to be the "norm", with Chinese tea a minority taste.

As one of the world's largest tea producers and exporters, India's tea industry contributes substantially to its agriculture-based economy by shipping processed tea globally. However, a growing domestic consumption and increasing production costs are impacting the export market, with a need for more investment in replanting and infrastructure to boost the sector's overall foreign exchange contribution.

Agriculture

The colonial policies in India led to the commercialisation of agriculture. Farmers started growing crops for profits instead of sustenance needs.

One of the essential causes of the commercialisation of agriculture during British rule was the increase in demand for agricultural products in Britain. As Britain's population grew, there was an increased demand for food grains, raw materials and fibres from India. This led to the British focusing on commercial farming of crops that were in need in Britain.

Another major cause of the commercialization of agriculture during British rule was the British introduction of new commercial crops. The British encouraged Indian farmers to grow cash crops like cotton, jute, wheat, indigo and opium, which were in high demand in Britain. Traditional crops were neglected, forcing farmers to grow more commercial crops.

The Land Revenue System enforced by the British also contributed to the commercialisation of agriculture. The revenue collected through land tax was fixed in amount. Farmers had to grow more cash crops to earn money to pay the heavy land taxes.³⁴ The zamindar system forced the farmers to produce more commercial crops to pay the higher taxes imposed by them.

New railways, roads and ports increased the sale of commercial crops in distant places. The spread encouraged farmers to focus on growing crops with high market demand.

The British did not diversify Indian agriculture or introduce modern techniques. There was a lack of irrigation facilities and agricultural research. This led farmers to focus on commercial crops that were in high demand.

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Towards Independence

While the Company era, from the establishment of the Madras Presidency in 1631 to 1858 was 227 years, the British era was to Independence was only 89 years. The latter were kept busy mainly with:

- .(a) a series of border wars, mainly in the Northwest. The Punjab and Burma
- .(b) sorting out relations with a vast number of Princely states of which there were 565 on independence day; the princely states covered 40% of the area of pre-independence India and constituted 23% of its population, and
- .(c.) dealing with the growing cry for independence

The **Indian National Congress (INC)** was founded on 28 December 1885, and especially after 1924 under the leadership of Mahatma Gandhi (see further on) became the leader of the Indian independence movement. The **All India Muslim League** was founded in 1905 to safeguard the interests of the Muslims.

Swadeshi

The **Swadeshi** Movement was actually launched in 1905, before Mahatma Gandhi returned to India from South Africa in 1917. It was the core of his **non-cooperation movement**, aimed to challenge the colonial economic and power structure, so that the British authorities would be forced to take notice of the demands of the independence movement.

Gandhi's call was for a nationwide protest by promoting swadeshi or "self-sufficiency" combined with his principal tactic of **Non-Cooperation**. The thrust of the latter movement was persuading all Indians to withdraw their labour from any activity that "sustained the British government and also economy in India," including British industries and educational institutions.

Gandhi's third principle was **Non-Violence (ahimsa)**. Through non-violent means protesters would refuse to buy British goods, adopt the use of local handicrafts and picket liquor shops. Moreover:

- . * all offices and factories would be closed;
- . * Indians would be encouraged to withdraw from Raj-sponsored schools, police services, the military, and the civil service, and lawyers were asked to leave the Raj's courts;
- . * public transportation and English-manufactured goods, especially clothing, was boycotted; and
- . * Indians returned honours and titles given by the government and resigned from various posts like teachers, lawyers, civil and military services.

Gandhi's non-cooperation movement also called for the end to untouchability.

He described it as the soul of **swaraj** (self-rule). The movement took its vast size and shape after rich Indians donated money and land dedicated to nationalist societies which started cloth production in every household. It also included other village industries so as to make village self-sufficient and self-reliant.

At many places, public burnings of foreign cloth were organised. Shops selling foreign cloths were closed. The cotton textile industry was described as the Swadeshi industry. The period witnessed the growth of swadeshi factories everywhere.

Self-Rule

In a major step towards self-rule, the Government of India Act, 1935 provided for provincial elections, which were held in 1936-7 in 11 provinces. The Indian National Congress gained power in eight of them; the three exceptions being Bengal, Punjab and Sindh, but successfully formed governments in five, the remainder being reluctant princely states. The All India Muslim League failed to form a Government in any Province.

Second World War

In 1939, Indian nationalists were angry that British brought India into the war without consultation with them. The Muslim League supported the war, but Congress was divided.

At the outbreak of war, the Congress Party had passed a resolution conditionally supporting the fight against the Axis, but were rebuffed when they asked for independence in return: If the war was to defend the status quo of imperialist possessions and colonies, of vested interest and privilege, then India could have nothing to do with it. If Great Britain fights for the maintenance and expansion of democracy, then she must necessarily end imperialism and establish full democracy in India, and the Indian people have the right to self-determination.

When high level talks failed, Gandhi launched the "Do or Die" **Quit India Movement** on 8 August 1942, demanding an end to British rule. In India, "An Orderly British Withdrawal" from India. Almost the entire Congress leadership of the was imprisoned without trial within hours of Gandhi's speech. Most spent the rest of the war in prison. On the civil side, the country went generally through the war in civil disobedience.

The British however had the support of the All India Muslim League, the Hindu Mahasabha, the princely states, the Indian Civil Service, and the Indian Imperial Police and the British Indian Army. Many Indian businessmen profiting from heavy wartime spending did not support the Quit India Movement.

During World War II, the **British Indian Army** contributed the world's largest volunteer army, sending over 2.5 million soldiers to fight on various fronts like North Africa, Europe, and Southeast Asia. India provided essential raw materials, supplies, and facilities for the war effort, and its involvement was a significant factor in the Allied victory.

The British Indian Army was the key British fighting presence in the **Burma Campaign**. They, some 1.4 million men of the Indian III, IV and XXXIII Corps, constituting the Fourteenth (XIV) Army of Britain under General William Slim, were key to breaking the Siege of Imphal-Kohima when the westward advance of Imperial Japan came to a halt in 1944. I have written a full account of this campaign as part of my book "Japanese Conquest of Malaya and Singapore 1941-42"²¹. The Burma campaign has been hailed Britain's greatest battle of all time, and Slim her greatest general of all time. The same Indian Army re-occupied Malaya and Singapore in September 1945, when I got to know many of them personally in Malacca²².

Independence

In 1945, when the Second World War almost came to an end, the Labour Party of the United Kingdom won elections with a promise to provide independence to India. The jailed political

²¹ - Published at <https://www.smashwords.com/books/view/995977>

²² - See, "The Story of Odiang" my Father, Released at <https://geraldpillay.wordpress.com/>

prisoners of the Quit India movement were released in the same year. India was granted Independence on 14 August 1947.

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Societal Transformation under British Colonialism

All things considered, the British Empire's rule in India reshaped its identity, history and culture. It accelerated the process of modernisation.

Political Evolution

It was the British who first adopted the term "India", and effectively created the political envelop and body politic of the future nation

For better or worse, British colonialism unified the country on a scale never before, enabling Mahatma Gandhi to enkindle nationalism and lead so many millions to independence. Even then, it had to be into three countries eventually.

Given their economic aggrandisement, the British bequeathed to India the democratic system. The first characteristic of the latter was the separation of religion and politics, This fitted perfectly into the multi-religious Indian environment, which has two major religions, with Hinduism possibly the most externally expressed of them all. Secondly, democracy was founded on the principles of free choice, the noblest level of human evolution. The democratic framework has enabled the flowering of four features deeply embedded in Hinduism, which are indelible constituents of the Indian identity or persona, namely: liberty, freedom of thought, freedom of speech and freedom of political choice. Today India successfully operates the largest modern democracy in the world.

The British also instituted a sound legal framework, and one of the best systems of justice in the world. These being secular institutions, the Indians have seamlessly incorporated these features as part of their culture.

Without this British shortcut to democracy, India might well have needed a Mao Zedong cultural revolution to line up where it is today.

Economic Infrastructure

The basic principle of colonialism is first to exploits the resources of the colony, and then invest the profits in the development of the motherland. Capital and technology would be invested in the colony mainly to improve the rate of return – or socially necessary.

Besides post, telegraphs and telecommunication networks, the British invested in other areas of infrastructure like railways, roads, canals, and ports. While these were put in place primarily to serve their administrative and economic interests, they had an enormous impact on the lives of the people, including their economies.. Perhaps the most pervasive were the post and telegraph systems. . The other important sector was irrigation, to support plantation agriculture.

Telegraph and Telecommunications

The British introduced the telegraph in India, between Calcutta and Agra, in 1854. The telephone followed in 1881, in Bengal. The development of these technologies served British administrative, security, and economic interests, but became the backbone of the future nation.

Railways

The British introduced the railway in India in 1850. The British are today most recognised for the massive expansion of the Indian railway network, then the fourth largest in the world. It is considered to be the greatest contribution of their rule. This network facilitated the movement of goods, including agricultural products, raw materials, and manufactured goods, across the country.

On the positive front, it enabled people to travel long distance and become more aware and take advantage of the geographical, cultural and economic resources of their own country. On the negative front, it promoted commercialisation of Indian agriculture, which adversely affected the self-sufficiency of the Indian village economies..

Iron and Steel

While India was a major source of raw materials like iron ore, the steel for the rails was largely imported from Britain, particularly in the early years, India latterly developed its own steel production capabilities particularly in areas like Bengal, where there were iron ore deposits, and some domestically produced rails were used.

While some early attempts at iron production existed before, like the British Bengal Iron Works in 1879, the Tata Iron and Steel Company (TISCO) in 1907 was the first Indian-owned integrated steel plant. Despite the potential for industrial development, the British government provided limited support to the Indian iron and steel industry.

The British showed no interest in building locomotives. the most obvious base for an iron and steel industry. By 1942, India had an estimated 8,000 locomotives in service, the majority steam powered. As far as I can make out, all were imported.

Over time, particularly in the early 20th century, a movement towards local manufacturing of locomotives and other railway equipment gained momentum. This was driven by factors like the desire to reduce reliance on imports and the growth of the Indian industrial sector.

A significant milestone was the establishment of the Tata Engineering and Locomotive Company (TELCO) (later Tata Motors) in 1945. The first locomotive manufacturing facility, Chittaranjan Locomotive Works, was commissioned only in 1950.

The Grand Trunk Road

Since my encounters with it in the novels of John Masters, my dream has been to do the Grand Trunk Road. It is one of Asia's oldest and longest major roads. For at least 2,500 years, it has linked Central Asia to the Indian subcontinent. It runs roughly 3,655 km (2,271 mi) from Teknaf, Bangladesh on the border with Myanmar west to Kabul, Afghanistan passing through India and Pakistan.

The road was considerably rebuilt in the British period between 1833 and 1860. The British, during their rule, renamed it the Grand Trunk Road and focused on its modernisation, extending and improving it for their administrative and military needs.

Even after the British period, the road has continued to be developed and maintained by the various countries through which it passes. I finally did the Peshawar-Kabul sector through the Khyber Pass in 1978. I do not think Alexander did it better. I arrived in Kabul garlanded, perched on the bridge between the driving cab and the open military truck, escorted by a platoon of armed Peshawar Guards, waving to the villagers.

Roads

The British did play a significant role in building and developing India's road network during their rule. Roads were essential for troop movement, administrative control, and facilitating trade.

The cars were imported. The first car was driven on Indian roads in 1897. The local motor industry primarily focused on assembly and minor modifications of imported vehicles. The first Indian-manufactured car did not come out until 1942. On the other hand the first Japanese car was made in 1907

Bicycles and motorcycles were introduced from the late 19th century. They were used mainly by the English and elite Indians. This contrasts with my own consultancy experience in Vietnam in the 1990s

when they were emerging from absolute communism, when these (and motorised carts) were the primary means of transport. India had its cows.

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Cultural Changes

English Language

The British introduced English in India, since this was the necessary language to function in a colonial setup. Progressively, they needed middleclass, technical and professional Indians to run the country. In retrospect, making future Indians bi-lingual, with the world's de facto future universal language as a second language has not been such a bad thing.

Education

The British went on to institutionalise a complete English education system, from primary to university. It was essentially for the few and the elite.

Primary school was introduced in 1835. The first university was the University of Calcutta in 1857. The first Indian admitted into the Indian Civil Service was Satyendranath Tagore who qualified in 1863. He was the elder brother of Rabindranath Tagore.

The first public Hindi school was not established by the British before independence; rather, they focused on introducing English education and established colleges like Elphinstone College and Bengal Medical College.

The universities offered a full range of Western education, in the sciences and technologies, as well as the liberal arts, thereby enabling Indians in time to inherit the entire content of the Scientific Revolution .

Interestingly, the first batch of medical doctors from an Indian university graduated in 1839, from the Medical College of Bengal which was established in 1835 . This marked the beginning of structured, Western-style medical education in India.

While the British education system exposed Indians to new ideas and technologies, it also created a sense of cultural inferiority and neglected the vast majority of the population. .

Social Changes

The British Empire's rule in India brought significant social changes. These changes altered traditional structures and influenced societal norms.

Caste System

The British rule impacted the caste system in several ways: They introduced a new legal framework. Which challenged traditional caste hierarchies.

Educational opportunities became more accessible to lower castes, and economic policies created new job opportunities for all castes

The British administration conducted extensive caste-based censuses. This formalised and rigidified the caste distinctions. Before British rule, these distinctions were more fluid.

Women's Rights

British rule had a profound impact on women's rights in India: .They banned the practice of sati (widow burning). They passed laws against child marriage. They promoted women's education through new schools. Women's access to healthcare improved.

The British also encouraged the rise of women's organisations. These organizations fought for women's rights and social reforms. They played a key role in advocating for gender equality.

. The struggle for independence united diverse communities. After years of resistance, India gained freedom in 1947.

Religious Impact

British rule had a complex and multifaceted impact on Hinduism, Buddhism, and Jainism. While not directly intended to benefit these religions, some aspects of British policies and interactions inadvertently led to changes and developments within them.

Hinduism:

The British, through Indologists and missionaries, played a role in shaping perceptions of Hinduism as a single, unified religion, often relying on texts preserved by Brahmins and observations of animist practices. This construction, while influential, has been criticized for potentially creating stereotypes and overlooking the diversity of Hindu beliefs and practices.

The encounter with colonial powers prompted Hindus to define and articulate their religious identity in response to external perceptions and criticisms. This process contributed to the development of a more coherent and unified understanding of Hinduism.

The British presence also led to social reforms within Hinduism, such as the abolition of sati and the promotion of female education. These changes, were supported by some Hindu reformers and contributed to a more egalitarian understanding of Hindu society.

Buddhism:

British scholars and administrators played a role in the rediscovery and study of Buddhist texts and sites in India, contributing to the revival of Buddhism in some regions.

In some cases, the British provided support for Buddhist monasteries and institutions, particularly in regions where Buddhism was still a living tradition.

The encounter with Western ideas and the critique of traditional Buddhist practices influenced some Buddhist reform movements, leading to a greater emphasis on rationalism and social engagement.

Jainism:

Similar to Hinduism, the British interest in Indian texts also led to the study and documentation of Jain scriptures and philosophical works.

Their social reforms indirectly benefited Jains by challenging caste-based discrimination and promoting social mobility.

Footnote 2: India Post-Independence

India had undergone socialist reforms from the 1950s to 1990s. During this period India experienced low rates of annual economic growth and low rates of per capita income growth

In 1991, the Indian economy underwent economic liberalisation, through which, India transitioned to a more service and market based sector, with particular emphasis on expanding foreign and private investment within India. liberalisation included reductions in import tariffs and taxes, as well as ending many nationalisations.

By the end of the 20th century, India had transitioned towards a free-market ,through which there was a major decline of state control over India's economy and increased financial liberalisation.

Under the British Raj rule, from 1880 to 1920, the Indian economy's GDP growth rate and population growth rate increased at approximately 1%. India's annual growth rate remained approximately around 3.5% prior to economic liberalisation. India's GDP growth rate slowly increased to 7% in the 2018-19 period.

By 2025, it is expected that the Indian working age population will account for at least one quarter of the world economy's working age population.

By 2035, the five largest cities in India are expected to have economies similar in size to middle income economies.

Footnote 3 Modern Hinduism

Following India's independence, Hinduism has seen significant developments including the modernization of Hindu law, increased global presence, and the rise of new interpretations and movements. These changes reflect a dynamic interplay between tradition, modernity, and interaction with the wider world.

. 1 Modernisation of Hindu Law: The post-independence period witnessed the codification and reform of Hindu law, aiming to create a more secular and equitable legal framework. These reforms, while complex and sometimes controversial, were aimed at addressing issues like caste discrimination and promoting gender equality within the legal system.

. 2 Global Expansion and Diaspora: Hindu communities have expanded significantly, particularly in Western countries like Britain and North America. This diaspora has led to the establishment of temples, religious institutions, and the spread of Hindu practices and philosophies globally.

.3 Rise of New Interpretations and Movements: The post-independence era has seen the emergence of various Hindu movements, some of which gained international prominence. Examples include the Hae Krishna movement , which attracted global attention with its distinctive practices and teachings. Additionally, there's been a growing engagement with scriptural texts and a move towards a more textual understanding of Hinduism.

.4 Influence of Modernity and Colonialism: The colonial period and the subsequent modernization efforts have significantly shaped the development of Hinduism. Hindu thinkers grappled with the challenges posed by Western education and missionary activity, leading to a re-evaluation of Hindu traditions and a greater emphasis on scriptural authority and rational interpretation.

.5 Continued Influence of Traditional Practices: Despite modernization, traditional practices like yoga and Vedanta continue to be prominent within Hinduism, both in India and internationally. These practices have seen a resurgence in popularity, attracting practitioners from diverse backgrounds.

FOOOTONOTE 4 Into the Global Society

For our purposes, India crossed the Thrid Turning Point of evolution into the Global Society with Independence in 1947. Unlike China, it has remained in the mainstream Western democratic system, offering a continuation of its historic multi-religious culture as an alternative evolutionary pathway as a choice).

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Chapter Four A

The Dharmatic Religious Traditions

(Editorial Note: The Dharmic religions refer to a grouping of religions originating in the Indian subcontinent, primarily Hinduism, Buddhism, Jainism, and Sikhism. All have crossed over Turning Point Three and are extant in the democratic system of the modern Global Society)

The Dharmatic Religious Traditions

These religions share a common foundation in the concept of dharma, which generally signifies righteousness, duty, or the natural order of things. While the specific interpretations of dharma vary across these religions, it remains a central principle guiding their practices and beliefs. Here's a breakdown of the key aspects:

Dharma:

In Sanskrit, "dharma" means "that which sustains" or "the way things are." It encompasses concepts like righteousness, law, duty, and the natural order of the universe.

Hinduism:

Dharma in Hinduism is a complex concept, often linked to the cosmic order (Rta) and individual duties based on one's stage of life and social position.

Buddhism:

Dharma in Buddhism refers to the teachings of the Buddha and the ultimate truth about reality. It is one of the Three Jewels (Buddha, Dharma, Sangha).

Jainism:

Dharma in Jainism emphasizes the path of righteousness, moral transformation, and the teachings of the Tirthankaras.

Sikhism:

In Sikhism, dharma signifies the path of righteousness, proper religious practices, and fulfilling one's moral duties.

The term "Dharmic religions" is used to highlight these shared roots and the central role of dharma in these traditions.

HINDUISM

Table 4A.1
Hinduism Time-line

1500-1200 BCE	Rigveda Sanhita (Bronze Age)
1200-800 BCE	Vedas completed.
1200-500 BCE	Vedic age. Vedism (Late Bronze-Iron age)
900- 300 BCE	Mainstream Hinduism emerges from the preceding: . Brahmanas (900-400 BCE) . Upanishads (800-400 BCE) . Puranas (700 BCE onwards) . Itihasa (Epics) (800 BCE onwards)

	. Sangam Literature (300BCE-300CE)
600- 200 BCE	The Axial age Śramaṇic Movement. Buddhism (528 BCE), Jainism (530 BCE) The Maurya empire (320-185 BCE)
200 BCE- 600 CE	The Classical age. The Golden age
320 CE – 600 CE	The Gupta empire. The Hindu Synthesis
600 -1206 CE	Political fragmentation. Puranic Hinduism.
1206-1526 CE	The Delhi Sultanate
1528-1867 CE	The Mughal Empire
1612 - 1947	The British Colonial Period

Historical Development

The Vedic period roughly 1500-500 BCE laid the foundation with its rituals and scriptures according to historical sources.

The period between 800 BCE and 200 BCE is considered an Axial age, a formative period for Hinduism, Jainism, and Buddhism, with a shift in focus from Vedic rituals. Under Asoka the Mauryan empire was largely Buddhist.

The period between 200 BCE and 600 CE is considered the Classical age (Golden age) of Indian civilisation under the Gupta empire and the Hindu Synthesis, a time of significant social and religious change.

The period between 600-1206 CE is considered one of political fragmentation, accompanied by a diversification and enlargement of Hinduism. The disintegration of central power led to regionalisation of religiosity, and religious rivalry. Local cults and languages were enhanced. The influence of "Brahmanic ritualistic Hinduism" was diminished, and rural and devotional movements arose, along with Shaivism, Vaishnavism, Bhakti and Tantra. The central development was Puranic Hinduism.

There was substantially no evolution of the Hindu faith during Mughal and British times, notwithstanding the former's attempts at inter-religiosity and the changes to social behaviour by the latter.

Notwithstanding modernisation of thought and practice, Hinduism, especially the spiritual and philosophical aspects which are our focus in this study, as we see it here remains substantively unaffected by modern history.

Hinduism is an umbrella term for a range of religious and spiritual practices unified by adherence to the concept of dharma, a cosmic order maintained by its followers through rituals and righteous living, as expounded in the Vedas. It has also been described by the modern term Sanatana Dharma (eternal dharma) emphasising its eternal nature. The Indian constitution uses the term "Hindu", but does not define it.

Culturally, the emerging India was a Hindu society. The latter was the amalgamation or fusing together of the Indo Aryan's Vedic religion and varna system with the resident socio-religious practices of the subcontinent.

Hindu Synthesis and After

The "Hindu synthesis" refers to the period downstream, between 200 BCE and 300 CE, where various Indian religious and philosophical traditions, including Brahmanical, Śramaṇic, and Buddhist influences, were integrated into what is recognized today as Hinduism.

The Hindu synthesis, took place primarily during the period of the second urbanisation and the early Classical period of Indian history. This period saw the composition of the Epics and the first Puranas, which played a crucial role in disseminating religious ideology.

Synthesis

The Hindu synthesis involved a gradual process of incorporating elements from these diverse traditions into what would become Hinduism. This included:

- . **1 Incorporation of Sramana ideas:** Buddhist and Jain concepts like renunciation, karma, and liberation were integrated into the Hindu framework.
- . **2 Development of Bhakti:** The Bhakti movement, emphasising personal devotion to deities, also became a significant part of the synthesis.
- . **3 Assimilation of local deities:** Local deities and cults were assimilated into the larger Hindu pantheon, often identified with Vedic gods, and
- . **4 Influence of Smṛiti literature:** The Smṛiti texts, including the epics (like the Ramayana and Mahabharata) and Puranas, played a crucial role in codifying and popularizing these integrated beliefs and practices.

The synthesis continued to evolve with the rise of different schools of thought like Vedānta, Sāṃkhya, and Yoga, and the Bhakti movement.

The Hindu synthesis led to a more inclusive and diverse religious landscape, with a wider range of philosophical schools, deities, and practices accepted within the Hindu fold. It also led to the development of the caste system and the concept of dharma.

The Sramana traditions drove the so-called Hindu synthesis after the Vedic period, that spread to southern India and parts of Southeast Asia. As it spread, this new Hinduism assimilated popular non-Vedic gods and other traditions from local cultures, and integrated societal divisions, called the caste system.

Disintegration

After the end of the Gupta Empire and the collapse of the Harsha Empire, power became decentralised in India. Several larger kingdoms emerged, with "countless vassal states".

The disintegration of central power led to regionalisation of religiosity and religious rivalry. Local cults and languages were enhanced, and the influence of "Brahmanic ritualistic Hinduism" was diminished. Rural and devotional movements arose, along with Shaivism, Vaishnavism, Bhakti and Tantra.

Buddhism lost its position after the 8th century, due to the loss of financial support from royal donors and the lack of appeal among the rural masses, and began to disappear in India. This was reflected in the change of puja-ceremonies at the courts in the 8th century, where Hindu gods replaced the Buddha as the "supreme, imperial deity".

Brahmanism underwent a radical transformation at the hands of the Purana composers, resulting in the rise of Puranic Hinduism.

Puranic Hinduism

This period saw the consolidation of classical Hinduism, with the development of Puranic Hinduism and the rise of influential figures like Adi Shankara, who systematised Advaita Vedanta.

Puranic Hinduism was a "multiplex belief-system which grew and expanded as it absorbed and synthesised polaristic ideas and cultic traditions". It was distinguished from its Vedic Smarta roots by its popular base, its theological and sectarian pluralism, its Tantric veneer, and the central place of bhakti.

Puranic Hinduism refers to a branch of Hinduism centered around the Puranas, a collection of ancient Indian texts that narrate Hindu mythology, cosmology, and religious practices. It is characterised by its emphasis on devotion (bhakti) to specific deities like Vishnu, Shiva, and the Mother Goddess, and the concept of avatars, or divine incarnations.

The Puranas tell stories of deities, their interactions with humans, and the creation and structure of the universe. Puranic Hinduism shifted from the Vedic emphasis on ritualistic practices to a more personal and emotional devotion to specific deities according to some Hindu texts.

The concept of the Trimurti (Brahma, Vishnu, and Shiva) as the primary deities emerged, leading to the development of major Hindu sects like Vaishnavism (devotion to Vishnu), Shaivism (devotion to Shiva), and Shaktism (devotion to the Mother Goddess).

The idea that deities can descend to Earth in human or animal form (avatars) is a central concept in Puranic Hinduism.

The Puranas, written in Sanskrit but later translated, made religious knowledge more accessible to the common people, unlike the Vedic texts which were primarily for the priestly class.

Puranic Hinduism introduced more elaborate temple worship and rituals, often involving deities, sacred objects, and specific practices.

Pilgrimages to holy sites and the performance of specific vows (vrata) became important aspects of religious practice.

Puranic Hinduism significantly influenced Indian art, literature, and culture, with countless stories and depictions of deities and their activities.

In essence, Puranic Hinduism represents a shift from the more abstract and ritualistic focus of the Vedic period to a more personal, devotional, and accessible form of Hinduism, characterised by its rich mythology, diverse deities, and emphasis on bhakti.

The classical period laid the foundation for many of the beliefs, practices, and philosophical systems that are central to Hinduism today.

Mughal Impact on Hinduism

While the Mughal emperors were Muslim, they generally adopted policies of religious tolerance, especially during the reigns of Akbar and his successors. This tolerance facilitated the flourishing of Hindu culture.

Emperor Akbar was known for his liberal religious policies. He abolished the tax on non-Muslims, encouraged the participation of Hindus in the administration, and even engaged in discussions with Hindu religious leaders. He created a syncretic religion called Din-i-Ilahi, which drew from various faiths, including Hinduism.

While some later emperors like Aurangzeb adopted more conservative policies, the overall trend was towards religious tolerance, with Hindus continuing to hold important positions in the government and

military. The Mughal policies fostered a degree of integration with Hindus participating in the court and administration.

The relationship between the Mughals and Hinduism was complex, with periods of tolerance and integration alongside instances of conflict and tension.

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British Impact

British rule had a complex and multifaceted impact on Hinduism, Buddhism, and Jainism. While not directly intended to benefit these religions, some aspects of British policies and interactions inadvertently led to changes and developments within them.

Hinduism:

The British, through Indologists and missionaries, played a role in shaping perceptions of Hinduism as a single, unified religion.

The encounter with colonial powers prompted Hindus to define and articulate their religious identity in response to external perceptions and criticisms. This process contributed to the development of a more coherent and unified understanding of Hinduism.

The British presence also led to social reforms within Hinduism, such as the abolition of sati and the promotion of female education. These changes, were supported by some Hindu reformers and contributed to a more egalitarian understanding of Hindu society.

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Their social reforms indirectly benefited Jains by challenging caste-based discrimination and promoting social mobility.

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General Nature of Hinduism²³

Hindus accept, and indeed celebrate, the organic, multileveled, and sometimes pluralistic nature of their traditions. This expansiveness is made possible by the widely shared Hindu view that truth or reality cannot be encapsulated in any creedal formulation. Hinduism maintains that truth must be sought in multiple sources, not dogmatically proclaimed.

²³ - <https://www.britannica.com/topic/Hinduism/Practice>

Anyone's view of the truth is fundamentally conditioned by the person's specifics of time, age, gender, state of consciousness social and geographic location, and stage of attainment.

These multiple perspectives enhance their broad. Hence, there is a strong tendency for contemporary Hindus to affirm that tolerance is the foremost religious virtue.

On the other hand, Hinduism has developed in the societal context of the Indian sub-continent. As such, the first of its many internal tensions is between universal and the particular, between the cosmopolitan and the traditional.

When Hindus speak of their religious identity as Sanatana Dharma, they emphasise its continuous, seemingly eternal (*sanatana*) existence more than describe the web of customs, obligations, traditions contextual to themselves. It far exceeds religion as a system of beliefs and practices. Hindus insist that Hinduism is not a religion but a way of life.

The five tensile strands

There are at least five elements have given shape to the Hindu religious tradition: doctrine, practice, society, story, and devotion. These five elements relate to one another as strands in an elaborate braid. Each strand develops out of a history of conversation, elaboration, and challenge. One commentator said that in looking for what makes the tradition cohere, it is sometimes better to locate central points of tension than to expect clear agreements on Hindu thought and practice.

Doctrine

The first of the five strands of Hinduism is doctrine, as expressed in a vast textual tradition anchored to the Vedas ("Knowledge"), the oldest core of Hindu religious utterance. Here several characteristic tensions appear. One concerns the relationship between the divine and the world. Another tension concerns the disparity between the world-preserving ideal of dharma and that of moksha (release from an inherently flawed world). A third tension exists between individual destiny, as shaped by karma (the influence of one's actions on one's present and future lives), and the individual's deep bonds to family, society, and the divinities associated with these concepts.

Practice

The second strand in the fabric of Hinduism is practice. Many Hindus, in fact, would place this first. Despite India's enormous diversity, a common grammar of ritual behaviour connects various places, strata, and periods of Hindu life.

While it is true that various elements of Vedic ritual survive in modern practice and thereby serve a unifying function, much more influential commonalities appear in the worship of icons or images. Broadly, this is called puja ("honouring [the deity]"); if performed in a temple by a priest, it is called archana. It echoes conventions of especially the giving and sharing of food. Such food is called prasada, when human beings make offerings to deities. They are actually responding to the generosity that bore them into a world fecund with life and possibility.

Some Hindus also believe that prasada is infused with the grace of the deity to whom it is offered. Consuming these leftovers, worshipers accept their status as beings inferior to and dependent upon the divine.

Society

The third strand that has served to organise Hindu life is the highly stratified (if locally variant) social structure. Indian society is notably plural and hierarchical.

There is however a vast disparity between the ancient vision of society as divided into four ideal classes (varnas) and the contemporary reality of thousands of endogamous birth-groups (jatis) that has come to be called the caste system.

This fact has much to do with an understanding of truth or reality as being similarly plural and multilayered—though it is not clear whether the influence has proceeded chiefly from religious doctrine to society or vice versa.

The social domain, like the realms of religious practice and doctrine, is marked by a characteristic tension. There is the view that each person or group is, approaches and reflects truth in a way that is necessarily distinct, reflecting its own perspective.

Yet this context of thought can too easily be used to legitimise social systems based on privilege and prejudice. Historically, therefore, certain Hindus, while espousing tolerance at the level of doctrine, have maintained caste distinctions in the social realm.

Story

Another dimension drawing Hindus into a single community of discourse is narrative. For at least two millennia, people in almost all corners of India—and now well beyond—have responded to stories of divine play and of interactions between gods and humans. These stories concern major figures in the Hindu pantheon.

Often such narratives illustrate the interpenetration of the divine and human spheres, with deities such as Krishna and Rama entering entirely into the human drama. Many tales focus in different degrees on genealogies of human experience, forms of love, and the struggle between order and chaos or between duty and play. In generating, performing, and listening to these stories, Hindus have often experienced themselves as members of a single imagined family. Yet, simultaneously, these narratives serve to articulate tensions connected with righteous behaviour and social inequities.

In north India lower-caste musicians present religious epics in terms that reflect their own experience of the world rather than the upper-caste milieu of the great Sanskrit religious epic the Mahabharata which these epics nonetheless echo.

Devotion

There is a fifth strand that contributes to the unity of Hindu experience through time: Bhakti (“sharing” or “devotion”), a broad tradition of a loving God that is especially associated with the lives and words of vernacular poet-saints throughout India.

Devotional poems attributed to these inspired figures, who represent both genders and all social classes, have elaborated a store of images and moods to which access can be had in a score of languages.

Bhakti verse first appeared in Tamil in south India and moved northward into other regions with different languages, without there being any trace of mediation through the pan-Indian, distinctly upper-caste language Sanskrit.

They bear the strong central affirmation that religious faith is more fundamental than rigidities of practice or doctrine.

Schools of Hindu Philosophy

There are six major orthodox (astika) schools of Hindu philosophy: Nyaya, Vaisheshika, Samkhya, Yoga, Mimamsa, and Vedanta. Among them, Samkhya, Yoga and Mimamsa, while not rejecting either the Vedas or Brahman typically reject a personal god, creator god or even a god with attributes.

Vedas

The Vedic period was marked by the composition of their extensive collections of hymns (Vedas).

The Vedas constitute the oldest scriptures of Hinduism. There are four Vedas: the (1) Rigveda, the (2) the Yajurveda, (3) the Samaveda, and the (4) Atharvaveda.

Each Veda has four subdivisions – (i) the Samhitas (mantras and benedictions), (ii) the Brahmanas (commentaries on rituals, ceremonies and sacrifices), (iii) the Brahmanas (commentaries on and explanation of rituals, ceremonies and sacrifices, the Yajnas and the Aranyakas (texts on rituals, ceremonies, sacrifices and symbolic-sacrifices), and (iv) the Upanishads (texts discussing medication, philosophy and spiritual knowledge).

Hindus consider the Vedas to be "not of a man, superhuman" and "impersonal, authorless, revelations of sacred sounds and texts heard by ancient sages after intense meditation".

The Vedas have been orally transmitted since the 2nd millennium BCE. The mantras, the oldest part of the Vedas, are considered to be "primordial rhythms of creation", preceding the forms to which they refer. By reciting them the cosmos is regenerated, "by enlivening and nourishing the forms of creation at their base."

Some post-Vedic texts, including the Mahabharata, and certain Puranas, refer to themselves as the fifth Veda."

Other texts such as the Bhagavad Gita or the Vadanta Sutras are considered "Vedic" by some denominations but not universally within Hinduism.

The Vedas

Rigveda:

Composed primarily between 1500-1200 BCE, with some scholars suggesting a wider range of 1700-1100 BCE. It is the oldest layer of Vedic Sanskrit literature and consists of hymns dedicated to various deities.

Samaveda:

Composed around 1200-800 BCE, it is largely based on the Rigveda and consists of chants and melodies used in rituals.

Yajurveda:

Also composed around 1200-800 BCE, it contains formulas and liturgical texts used in the performance of sacrifices.

Atharvaveda:

Composed around 1000-800 BCE, it contains a collection of spells, incantations, and charms.

They were orally transmitted by the arriving Indo Aryans until progressively written down. They were compiled, organised and written down by the rishi Vyasa around 500 BCE.

Jati (Caste) System

The Vedic period saw the emergence of a hierarchy of social classes that would remain influential. As the Vedic religion developed into Brahmanical orthodoxy, their social structure which was loosely stratified as the varna system, became incorporated into the highly evolved present-day (caste) Jati system.

The jati system is a form of social stratification that divides people into hereditary social groups based on birth. These groups, called **jatis**, are often linked to traditional occupations and form a complex hierarchy within the larger varna system.

While the varna system is a broader framework of four social classes (Brahmins, Kshatriyas, Vaishyas, and Shudras), jatis are more specific and numerous, with thousands existing within the varna system. Jatis are ranked within the broader varna hierarchy, with some jatis considered higher or lower in social status than others.

Membership in a jati is typically determined by birth, and jatis are often endogamous (marriage within the jati is preferred).

Traditionally, jatis were associated with specific occupations or trades, though this is not always strictly followed today.

Sanātana Dharma

Sanātana Dharma historically refers to the "eternal" duties religiously ordained in Hinduism, duties such as honesty, refraining from injuring living beings (ahimsa), purity, goodwill, mercy, patience, forbearance, self-restraint, generosity, and asceticism. These duties applied regardless of a Hindu's class, caste, or sect, and they contrast with Svadharma, one's "own duty", in accordance with one's class or caste (varna) and stage in life (purushartha).

In recent years, the term has been used by Hindu leaders, reformers, and nationalists to refer to Hinduism. Sanatana dharma has become a synonym for the "eternal" truth and teachings of Hinduism, that transcend history and are "unchanging, indivisible and ultimately "non-sectarian".

What Hindus Believe

Rigveda

(Hymn of non-Eternity):
 Who really knows?
 Who can here proclaim it?
 Whence, whence this creation sprang?
 Gods came later, after the creation of this universe.
 Who then knows whence it has arisen?
 Whether God's will created it, or whether He was mute;
 Only He who is its overseer in highest heaven knows,
 He only knows, or perhaps He does not know.
 — Rig Veda 0.129.6–7.

A Hindu views the entire universe as God's and everything in the universe as God. Hindus believe that each person is intrinsically divine, and the purpose of life is to seek and realise the divinity within all of us. The Hindu belief is totally non-exclusive and accepts all other faiths and religious paths.

Prominent themes in Hindu beliefs include karma (action, intent and consequences), saṃsāra (the cycle of death and rebirth) and the four Puruṣārthas, proper goals or aims of human life, namely: dharma (ethics/duties), artha (prosperity/work), kama (desires/passions) and moksha (liberation/freedom from passions).

There are Vedic schools that believe in different gods: (a) henotheistic beliefs, where only one god was worshipped but others were thought to exist; (b) monotheistic beliefs in a single god; (x) agnosticism; and (d) monasticism where "there is an absolute reality that goes beyond the gods and that includes or transcends everything that exists".

Hinduism is sometimes considered nontheistic because it emphasises following one's dharma, or duty, more than worshipping deities. The most famous and widely considered nontheistic religions are Buddhism, Confucianism, Taoism, and Jainism.

Most Hindus believe that humans are in a cycle of death and rebirth called samsara. When a person dies, their atman (soul) is reborn in a different body. Some believe rebirth happens directly at death, others believe that an atman may exist in other realms.

After death, the soul is reincarnated, taking birth in another physical body or form. Passing from one life to the next, each soul is on a journey of spiritual development facilitated in part by karma, the concept that every thought and action has a corresponding reaction.

In Hinduism, all life goes through birth, life, death, and rebirth and this is known as the cycle of samsara. In Hinduism, Buddhism and Sikhism, this is the cycle of life, death and rebirth

In Hinduism (or more precisely in Sanatana Dharma), the concept of Heaven and Hell exists alongside reincarnation.

Cows are very important to Hindus because they are considered to be like mothers. Mothers give their babies milk, which is one of the most important things for growing up and staying healthy.

Brahma

Brahma is a Hindu god, referred to as "the Creator" within the Trimurti, the trinity of supreme divinity, that includes Vishnu and Shiva. He is associated with creation, knowledge, and the Vedas. Brahma is prominently mentioned in creation legends.

Brahma is traditionally depicted with four faces and four arms. Each face of his points to a cardinal direction. His hands hold no weapons, rather symbols of knowledge and creation. In one hand, he holds the sacred texts of Vedas; in the other hand, he holds a maia, symbolising the time to create the universe; in the another hand, he holds a shruka, a ladle, symbolising the means to feed sacrificial fire; and in the even other hand, a kamandatu, a utensil with water symbolising the means from where all creation emits. His four mouths are credited with creating the four Vedas. He is often depicted with a white beard, implying his sage-like experience. He sits on lotus, dressed in white (or red and pink), with his vehicle, a swan – nearby.

During the post-Vedic period, his sect existed during the 2nd century CE to 6th century CE. Early texts describe that there was nothing but an eternal ocean. From this, a golden egg emerged. The egg broke open and Brahma, who had created himself within it, came into existence. Then, he created the universe, the earth, and other things. He also created people to populate and live on his creation. However, by the 7th century CE, Brahma lost his importance.

Upanishads

The concepts of Brahman, the Ultimate Reality from which everything arises, and Atman, the essence of the individual, are central ideas in the Upanishads, and knowing the correspondence between Atman and Brahman as "the fundamental principle which shapes the world" permits the creation of an integrative vision of the whole.

The Upanishads are the foundation of Hindu philosophical thought and its diverse traditions. Of the Vedic corpus, they alone are widely known; and the central ideas of the Upanishads have influenced the diverse traditions of Hinduism.

The Upanishads reflect the last composed layer of texts in the Vedas. They are commonly referred to as Vedanta, variously interpreted to mean either the "last chapters, parts of the Vedas" or "the object, the highest purpose of the Veda".

The central concern of the Upanishads are the connections "between parts of the human organism and cosmic realities." The Upanishads intend to create a hierarchy of connected and dependent realities, evoking a sense of unity of "the separate elements of the world and of human experience, compressing] them into a single form."

Puranas

The Puranas is a vast genre of encyclopaedic Indian literature about a wide range of topics particularly myths, legends and other traditional lore. Several of these texts are named after major deities such as Vishnu, Shiva and Devi. There are 18 Maha Puranas (Great Puranas) and 18 Upa Puranas (Minor Puranas), with over 400,000 verses.

Denominations

Hinduism has no central doctrinal authority and many practising Hindus do not claim to belong to any particular denomination or tradition. Four major denominations are, however, used in scholarly studies: Shaivism, Shaktism, Smartism, and Vaishnavism.

These denominations differ primarily in the central deity worshipped. Hindu denominations are fuzzy, with individuals practising more than one, ie "Hindu polycentrism".

Vaishnavism is the devotional religious tradition that worships Vishnu and his avatars, particularly Krishna and Rama. The adherents of this sect are generally non-ascetic, monastic, oriented towards community events and devotionism practices inspired by "intimate loving, joyous, playful" Krishna and other Vishnu avatars. Temple worship and festivals are typically elaborate in Vaishnavism. The Bhagavad Gita and the Ramayana, along with Vishnu-oriented Purana, provide its theistic foundations.

Shaivism is the tradition that focuses on Shiva. Shaivas are more attracted to ascetic individualism, and it has several sub-schools. Their practices include bhakti-style devotionism, yet their beliefs lean towards nondual, monistic schools of Hinduism such as Advaita and Raja Yoga. Some Shaivas worship in temples, while others emphasise yoga, striving to be one with Shiva within. Avatars are uncommon, and some Shaivas visualise god as half male, half female, as a fusion of the male and female principles. Shaivism is related to Shaktism, wherein Shakti is seen as spouse of Shiva. Shaivism has been more commonly practised in the Himalayan north from Kashmir to Nepal, and in south India.

Shaktism focuses on goddess worship of Shakti or Devi as cosmic mother, and it is particularly common in northeastern and eastern states of India such as Assam and Bengal. Devi is depicted as in gentler forms like Parvati, the consort of Shiva; or, as fierce warrior goddesses like Kali and Durga. Followers of Shaktism recognise Shakti as the power that underlies the male principle.

Smartism centres its worship simultaneously on all the major Hindu deities: Shiva, Vishnu, Shakti, Ganesha, Surya and Skanda. The Smarta tradition is aligned with Advaita Vedanta, which considered worship of God-with-attributes as a journey towards ultimately realising God-without-attributes (Nirguna Brahman, Atman, Self-knowledge). This Hindu sect practices a philosophical Jnana yoga, scriptural studies, reflection, and a meditative path seeking an understanding of Self's oneness with God.

There are no census data available on the traditions within Hinduism. Estimates vary on the relative number of adherents. According to a 2010 estimate the Vaishnavism tradition is the largest group with about 641 million or 67.6% of Hindus, followed by Shaivism with 252 million or 26.6%, Shaktism with 30 million or 3.2% and other traditions including Neo-Hinduism and Reform Hinduism with 25 million or 2.6%. In contrast, according another estimate, Shaivism is the largest tradition of Hinduism.

Hinduism and Afterlife

The concepts of the cycle of birth and death, samsāra, and liberation partly derive from Sramantic traditions that arose in India around the middle of the first millennium BCE.

The first textual references to the idea of reincarnation appear in the Rigveda and Yajurveda, and Upanishads of the late Vedic period (1100 – 500 BCE), predating the Buddha and Mahavira.

The early Vedas mention the doctrine of karma and rebirth. It is in the early Upanishads where these ideas are developed. The earliest layers of Vedic text incorporate the concept of life, followed by an afterlife in heaven and hell based on cumulative virtues (merit) or vices (demerit). However, the ancient Vedic rishis challenged this idea of afterlife as simplistic, because people do not live equally moral or immoral lives. They introduced the idea of an afterlife in heaven or hell in proportion to one's merit.

Detailed descriptions first appear around the mid-1st millennium BCE in diverse traditions, including Buddhism, Jainism and various Hindu schools, each of which gave unique expression to the general principle.

Sangam literature (Tamil literature) contains several mentions of rebirth and moksha. The text explains Hindu rituals surrounding death such as making rice-balls called pinda and cremation. The text states that good souls get a place in Indraloka where Indra welcomes them.

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JAINISM

Sects

Jainism is one of the oldest religions still practiced today. It has two major ancient sub-traditions, the Digambara and the Svetambara, with the latter being the larger of the two today. They hold different views on ascetic practices, gender, and the texts considered canonical.

Both sub-traditions have mendicants supported by lay-persons (sravakas and sravikas). The Svetambara tradition in turn has two sub-traditions: Deravasi, also known as Mandirmargis, and the Sthānakavasī.

The religion has between four and five million followers, known as **Jains** or **Jainas**, who reside mostly in India. Outside India, some of the largest Jain communities can be found in Canada, Europe and the USA.

Founder Mahavira

Jainism was founded by a series of teachers or "Thahankara" (Supreme Preacher of Jainism), of whom Mahavira (599–527 BCE) was the 24th. He was the spiritual successor of the 23rd Tirthankara, one Parsvanatha.

Mahavira was born to a royal Kshatriya Jain family. According to the histories, Siddhartha and his family were Jain devotees. Mahavira abandoned all worldly possessions at the age of about 30 and left home in pursuit of spiritual awakening, becoming an ascetic. Mahavira practiced intense meditation and severe austerities for twelve and a half years, after which he attained Kevala Jnana (omniscience). He preached for 30 years and attained moksha (liberation) in the 6th century, in 527 BC or thereabouts.

Mahavira taught attainment of samyak darshan or self-realisation through the practice of bhedviijnāna, which involves positioning oneself as a pure soul, separate from body, mind and emotions, and being aware of the soul's true nature; and to remain grounded and steadfast in the soul's unchanging essence during varying auspicious or inauspicious external circumstances.

He preached that the observance of the vows of ahimsa (non-violence), satya (truth), asteva (non-stealing), brahmacharya (chastity) and aparigraha (non-attachment) are necessary for spiritual liberation.

Mahavira's teachings were compiled by his chief disciple as the Jain Agamas. The texts, transmitted orally by Jain monks, are believed to have been largely lost by about the 1st century CE.

Mahavira is usually depicted in a sitting or standing meditative posture, with the symbol of a lion beneath him. Historically, Mahavira, who revived and preached Jainism in ancient India, was an older contemporary of Gautama Buddha.

Origins

The Jains claim their religion to be eternal, and consider Rishbabhanatha the founder in the present time-cycle, who lived for 8,400,000 purva years. Rishbabhanatha was the first Jain, the first tirthankara among the 24 tirthankaras.

Jainism's origin can be traced to the 23rd Tirthankara, in 8th–7th century BCE. The first twenty-two were legendary mythical figures. Jainism was in existence long before the Vedas were composed. According to Jain texts, the 22nd *Tirthankara* lived about 84,000 years ago and was the cousin of Krishna.

The two main sects of Jainism likely started forming around the 1st century CE, and the schism was complete by about the 5th century CE. These sects later subdivided into several sub-sects.

After the 12th century CE, the temples, pilgrimage, and Jain ascetics suffered persecution during the Muslim rule, with the exception of Akbar.

What Jains believe

Jainism belongs to the sramana tradition. It prescribes ahimsa (non-violence) towards all living beings to the greatest possible extent. The three main teachings of Jainism are ahimsa, anekataavada (non-absolutism), and aparigraha (non-possessiveness).

Followers of Jainism take five main vows: ahimsa, satya (not lying), asteya (non-stealing), brahmacharya (chastity), and aparigraha. Monks follow them completely whereas householders observe them partially. Self-discipline and ascetism are thus major focuses of Jainism.

Jains believe the universe is made up of six eternal substances: sentient beings or souls (jiva), non-sentient substance or matter (pudgala), the principle of motion (dharma), the principle of rest (adharma), space (akasa), and time (kala). The last five are united as the ajiva (non-living).

Jains distinguish a substance from a complex body, or thing, by declaring the former a simple indestructible element, while the latter is a compound made of one or more substances that can be destroyed. Attva connotes reality or truth in Jain philosophy and is the framework for salvation.

According to Digambara Jains, there are seven tattvas: the sentient (jiva or living), the insentient (ajiva or non-living), the karmic influx to the soul (asrava - which is a mix of living and non-living), the bondage of karmic particles to the soul (bandha), the stoppage of karmic particles (samvara), the wiping away of past karmic particles (nirvara), and the liberation (moksha).

True insight in Jain philosophy is considered as "faith in the tattvas". The spiritual goal in Jainism is to reach moksha for ascetics, but for most Jain laypersons, it is to accumulate good karma that leads to better rebirth and a step closer to liberation.

The souls who live happily in the body of a heavenly celestial do so because of their positive karma. It is further stated that they possess a more transcendent knowledge about material things and can anticipate events in the human realms. However, once their past karmic merit is exhausted, it is explained that their souls are reborn again as humans, animals or other beings.

The perfect enlightened souls with a body are called anahants (victors) and perfect souls without a body are called siddhas (liberated souls). Only a soul with human body

can attain enlightenment and liberation. The liberated beings are the supreme beings and are worshipped by all heavenly, earthly and hellish beings who aspire to attain liberation themselves.

Non-Violence

The principle of ahimsa (non-violence or non-injury) is a fundamental tenet of Jainism. It holds that one must abandon all violent activity and that without such a commitment to non-violence all religious behavior is worthless. In Jain theology, it does not matter how correct or defensible the violence may be, one must not kill or harm any being, and non-violence is the highest religious duty.

One must renounce all killing of living beings, whether tiny or large, movable or immovable. Its theology teaches that one must neither kill another living being, nor cause another to kill, nor consent to any killing directly or indirectly.

Non-Attachment

The third main principle in Jainism is aparigraha, which means non-attachment to worldly possessions. For monks and nuns, Jainism requires a vow of complete non-possession of any property, relations and emotions. Aparigraha applies to both the material and the psychic. Material possessions refer to various forms of property. Psychic possessions refer to emotions, likes and dislikes, and attachments of any form. Unchecked attachment to possessions is said to result in direct harm to one's personality.

Jainism and God

In Jainism, godliness is said to be the inherent quality of every soul. This quality, however, is subdued by the soul's association with karmic matter. All souls who have achieved the natural state of infinite bliss, infinite knowledge, infinite power and infinite perception are regarded as **God in Jainism**.

Jainism rejects the idea of a creator deity responsible for the manifestation, creation, or maintenance of this universe. Instead, souls who have reached Heaven for their merits and deeds influence the universe for a fixed period until they undergo re-incarnation and continue the cycle of enlightenment.

According to Jain doctrine, the universe and its constituents (namely, soul, matter, space, time, and principles of motion) have always existed. All constituents and actions are governed by universal natural laws.

According to this view, the qualities of a soul are subdued due to karmas of the soul. The latter are the fundamental particles of nature in Jainism. One who achieves this state of soul through right belief, right knowledge and right conduct, can be termed a god. This perfection of soul is called kevalin. A god thus becomes a liberated soul – liberated of miseries, cycles of rebirth, world, karmas and finally liberated of body as well. This is called nirvana or moksha.

Jainism does not teach the dependency on any supreme being for enlightenment. The Tirthankara points the way to enlightenment, but the struggle for enlightenment is one's own. Moral rewards and sufferings are not the work of a divine being, but a result of an innate moral order in the cosmos; a self-regulating mechanism whereby the individual reaps the fruits of his own actions through the workings of the karmas.

Jains believe that to attain enlightenment and ultimately liberation from all karmic bonding, one must practice the ethical principles not only in thought, but also in words (speech) and action. Such a practice through lifelong work towards oneself is regarded as observing the "Great Vows".

Jainism considers the devis and devas to be souls who dwell in heavens owing to meritorious deeds in their past lives. These souls are in heavens for a fixed lifespan and even they have to undergo reincarnation as humans to achieve moksha

Life-Style

The lifestyle and behavioural conduct of a monk is guided by a code called the mulacara. This includes 28 primary attributes) for the monk.

These are: 5 great vows; 5 restraints; 5 control of the five senses; 6 essential observations, and 7 rules.

A special feature of Jainism is that monks are urged not to wear clothes – as a practice of detachment from possessions.

Nuns

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Female monastics in Digambara tradition are known as arikas, Digambara nuns, unlike the monks in their tradition, wear clothes.

Given their beliefs such as non-attachment and non-possession, the Digambara tradition has held that women cannot achieve salvation (moksha) as men can, and the best a nun can achieve is to be reborn as a man in the next rebirth. The monks are held to be of higher status than nuns,

Soul

According to Jainism, the existence of "a bound and ever changing soul" is a self-evident truth, an axiom which does not need to be proven, maintains that there are numerous souls, but every one of them has three qualities: consciousness (chaitanya, the most important), bliss (sukha) and vibrational energy (virya).

It further claims the vibration draws karmic particles to the soul and creates bondages, but is also what adds merit or demerit to the soul. Jain texts state that souls exist as "clothed with material bodies", where it entirely fills up the body.

Karma

Karma, as in other Indian religions, connotes in Jainism the universal cause and effect law. However, it is envisioned as a material substance (subtle matter) that can bind to the soul, travel with the soul in bound form between rebirths, and affect the suffering and happiness experienced by the jiva in the lokas. Karma is believed to obscure and obstruct the innate nature and striving of the soul, as well as its spiritual potential in the next rebirth

The conceptual framework of the Samsāra doctrine differs between Jainism and other Indian religions. Soul (jiva) is accepted as a truth, as in Hinduism but not Buddhism. The cycle of rebirths has a definite beginning and end in Jainism. Jain theosophy asserts that each soul passes through 8,400,000 birth-situations as they circle through samsara going through five types of bodies: earth bodies, water bodies, fire bodies, air bodies and vegetable lives, constantly changing with all human and non-human activities from rainfall to breathing.

Harming any life form is a sin in Jainism, with negative karmic effects. Jainism states that souls begin in a primordial state, and either evolve to a higher state or regress if driven by their karma, It further clarifies that *abhavya* (incapable) souls can never attain moksha (liberation). It explains that the abhavya state is entered after an intentional and shockingly evil act.

Souls can be good or evil in Jainism According to Jainism, a Siddha (liberated soul) has gone beyond samsara is at the apex, is omniscient, and remains there eternally.

Jain cosmology

As in Buddhism and Hinduism, both time and the universe are eternal, but the universe is transient. The universe, body, matter and time are considered separate from the soul (jiva). Their

interaction explains life, living, death and rebirth in Jain philosophy. The Jain cosmic universe has three parts, the upper, middle, and lower worlds.

Jainism states that Kāla (time) is without beginning and eternal; the cosmic wheel of time, rotates ceaselessly. In this part of the universe, it explains, there are six periods of time within two eons (ara), and in the first eon the universe generates, and in the next it degenerates.

Thus, it divides the worldly cycle of time into two half-cycles, ascending, progressive prosperity and happiness). and descending, increasing sorrow and immorality. It states that the world is currently in the fifth *ara* full of sorrow and religious decline, where the height of living beings shrinks. According to Jainism, after the sixth *ara*, the universe will be reawakened in a new cycle.

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BUDDHISM

Buddha

Siddhartha Gautama, most commonly referred to as the Buddha, was a wandering ascetic and religious teacher during the 6th or 5th century BCE, who founded Buddhism.

He was born in Lumbini, Nepal, to royal parents but renounced home life to live as a wandering ascetic. After leading a life of mendicancy, asceticism and medication, he attained nirvana at Bodhi Gaya, in India. The Buddha then wandered through the lower Indo-Gangetic Plain teaching and building a monastic order.

After six years of ascetic practice, Siddhartha attained full enlightenment at the age of thirty five. He died at the age of eighty in India. Buddhist tradition holds he died in Kushinagar and reached *parinirvana* ("final release from conditioned existence").

After his death, he came to be known by the title Buddha, which means 'Awakened One' or 'Enlightened One'

His teachings were compiled by the Buddhist community in the Vinaya, his codes for monastic practice, and the Sutta Pitak, a compilation of teachings based on his discourses were passed down orally. Later generations composed additional texts, such as systematic treatises known as Abhidharma, biographies of the Buddha, collections of stories about his past lives known as Jataka Tales and additional discourses, i.e., the Mahayana Sutra discourses.

Buddhism spread beyond the Indian subcontinent, evolving into a variety of traditions and practices, represented by Theravada and Mahayana. While Buddhism declined in India, and mostly disappeared after the 8th century CE due to a lack of popular and economic support, Buddhism is more prominent in Southeast and East Asia.

Vinaya

The **Vinaya** texts are the Buddhist canon that also contain the rules and precepts for fully ordained monks and nuns.

Three parallel Vinaya school traditions remain in use by modern ordained *sanghas*: Theravada in Sri Lanka and SEA, the second in Tibetan and Himalayan Buddhism, and Dharmaguptaka in Taiwan and East Asia. In addition to these three Vinaya traditions, five other Vinaya schools of Indian Buddhism are preserved in Asian canonical manuscripts

The word *Vinaya* is derived from a Sanskrit verb that can mean to lead, take away, train, tame, or guide, or alternately to educate or teach. It is often translated as 'discipline', with *Dhamma-vinaya*, 'doctrine and discipline',

What Buddhists Believe

The Middle Way

The Buddha taught a Middle Way between sensual indulgence and severe asceticism, leading to freedom from ignorance, craving, re-birth and suffering. The object is to attain nirvana, release from the wheel of life.

His core teachings are summarised in the Four Noble Truths and the Noble Eightfold Path, a training of the mind that includes ethical training, and kindness, and meditative practices.

The Four Noble Truths are

- . (1) – Dukkha, not being at ease, 'suffering', standing unstable, an innate characteristic of transient existence: nothing is forever, this is painful.
- . (2) - Samudaya, there is also thirst, craving for and attachment to this transient, unsatisfactory existence;
- . (3) – Nirodha, cessation, ending, confinement: the attachment to this transient world and its pain can be severed or contained by the confinement or letting go of this craving;
- . (4) - Marga, road, path, way: The path leading to the confinement of this desire and attachment, and the release from Dukkha.

The Noble Eightfold Path is:

The Eightfold Path consists of eight practices: right view, right resolve, right speech, right conduct, right livelihood, right effort, right mindfulness, and right samadh ('meditative absorption or union'. alternatively, equanimous meditative awareness.

Symbolically, the above represent the awakening and liberation of the Buddha, and of the potential for his followers to reach the same liberation and freedom as him. They provide a conceptual framework for introducing and explaining Buddhist thought, which has to be personally understood or "experienced".

Another key element of Buddha's teachings are the concepts of the five standhas and dependent origination, describing how all dharmas (both mental states and concrete 'things') come into being, and cease to be, depending on other dharmas, lacking an existence on their own.

Buddhism is a religion that does not include the belief in a monotheistic creator deity. As such, it has often been described as either (non-materialistic) atheism or as nontheistic. Like, Hinduism, the underlying concept is cyclic reincarnation (and purification until release.)

Hindu traditions consider soul to be the unchanging eternal essence of a living being, which journeys through reincarnations until it attains self-knowledge. Buddhism, in contrast, asserts a rebirth theory without a Self, and considers realisation of non-Self or Emptiness as Nirvana (nibbana).

Buddhist deities

Buddhist teachings state that there are divine beings called devas (sometimes translated as 'gods') and other deities, heavens, and rebirths in its doctrine of samsara or cyclical rebirth. None of these gods is a creator or an eternal being. However, they can live very long lives. In Buddhism, the devas are also trapped in the cycle of rebirth and are not necessarily virtuous. While Buddhism includes multiple "gods", its main focus is not on them.

Buddhism and Hinduism

According to Buddhism, the Hindu gods like Brahma and Indira do exist. However, these gods are considered to be mortal (even though they have very long lives) and thus as being subject to rebirth.

The Buddha did not deny the existence of the gods of the Vedic pantheon, but rather argued that these devas, who may be in a more exalted state than humans, are still nevertheless trapped in the same cycle of suffering as other beings and are not necessarily worthy of veneration and worship.

Buddhism does not accept the Hindu theory of a creator deity. While Buddhism inherited some practices and ideas from the previous Indian yogic traditions, its understanding is different from that of Hindu teachings. In Buddhism, nirvana is not attained through bhakti (devotion) to God nor is it attained through a yogic unity with Brahman/God.

Buddhist philosophers developed extensive refutations of creationism and Hindu theism. Because of this, some modern scholars, have described this later stage of Buddhism as anti-theistic, in response to the presence of Christian missionaries.

Despite this, some writers have noted that certain doctrines can be seen as being similar to certain theistic doctrines, pantheism and process theism.

Buddhism teaches that there is a cycle of death and rebirth called samsara. Through karma and eventual enlightenment, Buddhists hope to escape samsara and achieve nirvana, an end to suffering. Karma. Karma is found within many forms of Indian religion including Buddhism, Hinduism and Jainism. In Sanskrit karma means 'action'. It is linked to systems of cause and effect, as well as being a key factor in rebirth.

Buddhism and God

The Buddha does not provide specific arguments against the existence of God, instead he focuses on the ethical issues that arise from this belief. The Buddha mostly ignored the idea of a God as being irrelevant to his teachings.

The Buddha saw the idea of a creator God as problematic and as possibly leading to a kind of fatalism or ethical nihilism that leaves all ethical concerns to a God. In another passage, the Buddha argues that if a Supreme creator exists, the suffering experienced by certain beings would mean that this creator is evil.

Buddhism contains the idea of the Adi-Buddha ("First Buddha"), which some have compared to God concepts from Vedanta. However, modern Tibetan Buddhist masters like the Dalai have written that this Adi-Buddha concept is not a God but a symbol for the Dharmakaya.

Buddhism and Hindu Castes

The Buddha disagreed with the divine basis for caste (jati) distinctions made in the Brahmanical religion, and he offered ordination to all regardless of caste (whereas in Brahminism only those born to brahmins can be priests and study the religious scriptures). In regard to the social system (varna), although Buddha did not try to dismantle this system, he spoke out against Brahmin super-racism and the notion of any *varna* being superior or inferior to another.

Thus, the Buddha also critiqued the idea that brahmins were somehow superior or inherently pure due to their bloodline. Buddhism argues that the main difference among humans are their actions and occupations, not their bloodline.

The Buddha held that there is one universal moral law (Dharma) that is valid for everybody. Thus, Buddhism rejects the idea of caste duty (swardharma), the idea that every person is assigned a fixed duty or law based on the caste they are born into. Furthermore, for Buddhists, violence was wrong for all, whether one was part of the warrior caste or not.

All social classes or varnas arose naturally through sociological factors; they were not divinely ordained. Buddhism rejects the view that the Brahmin caste was born from the mouth of God, and thus are special. Instead, it states that this class of people developed because people in the past meditated and compiled scriptures.

Buddha also argues that good and bad deeds are found in all castes and that moral purity comes from one's own actions, not one's birth. Because of this, all castes including untouchables were welcome in the Buddhist order and when someone joined, they renounced all caste affiliation.

The Buddha defined the word "brahmin" as referring to a spiritually liberated person. This replaced a distinction based on birth with one based on spiritual attainment.

Buddhism, which originated in India, gradually dwindled starting in the 4th-6th century CE, and was replaced by Hinduism, approximately by the 12th century, in a centuries-long process.

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SIKHISM

Foundation: Guru Nanak

The Sikh gurus are the spiritual masters of Sikhism, who established the religion over the course of about two and a half centuries, beginning in 1469. The latter year 1469 marks the birth of Guru Nanak the founder of Sikhism. The Sikh records state that Nanak died in 1539 CE, at the age of 70 years.

He was succeeded by nine other human gurus until, in 1708, when the guru-ship was finally passed on by the tenth guru to the holy Sikh scripture, Guru Granth Sahib, which is now considered the living Guru by the followers of the Sikh faith.

The guru-ship was also passed onto the Guru Panth, consisting of the Khalsa. However, this means of guru ship went into decline following to rise of Ranjit Singh (1780 –1839 CE) who was the founder of the Sikh empire first in the northwest, ruling from 1801 until his death in 1839.

Guru Nanak's words are registered in the form of 974 poetic hymns or shabda in the holy religious scripture of Sikhism, It is part of their religious belief that the spirit of Nanak's sanctity, divinity, and religious authority had descended upon each of the nine subsequent Gurus when the Guru-ship was devolved on to them.

Political History

The history of the Sikh faith is closely associated with the history of Punjab and the socio-political situation in the north-west of the Indian subcontinent during the 17th century. From the rule of India by the Mughal Emperor Jahangir (1605–1627 CE), Sikhism came into conflict with Mughal laws, because they were affecting political successions, while cherishing Sufi saints from Islam. Mughal rulers killed many prominent Sikhs. Of the ten Sikh gurus, two were tortured and executed, and close kin of several gurus were brutally killed, along with numerous other main revered figures of Sikhism.

By the start of the 18th century, the Mughals were struggling with a number of political issues. India started to fragment after the death of the Mughal Emperor Aurangzeb in 1707, eventually becoming a

collection of kingdoms ruled by individuals who claimed nominal allegiance to the Mughal Emperor Muhammad Shah (1719–1748 CE), but essentially acted as independent rulers.

Another political danger was the expansion of the Maratha. By the beginning of the 18th century, the Indian subcontinent was still a huge and prosperous agricultural economy, but it was becoming more and more divided, making it an alluring target for a conqueror short on finance.^[9]

Subsequently, Sikhism militarised itself to oppose Mughal hegemony. The Sikh Confederacy of twelve sovereign Sikh states (each known as a Misal) rose during the 18th century in the Punjab and is cited as one of the causes of the weakening of the Moghul empire - prior to Nader Shah's invasion of India (1738-1740).

Emperor Nader Shah, the Shah of Iran, (1736–1747), invaded Northern India, eventually attacking Delhi in March 1739. Nader Shah's victory against the weak and crumbling Mughal Empire in the far east meant that he could afford to turn back and resume war against Persia's arch-rival, the neighbouring Ottoman empire.

The emergence of the Sikh empire under the reign of the Maharajah Ranjit Singh (1792–1839 CE) was characterised by religious tolerance with Christians, Muslims and Hindus in positions of power. The establishment of the Sikh Empire in 1799 is commonly considered the zenith of Sikhism in the political sphere. The Sikh Empire came to include Kashmir, Ladakh and Peshawar.

Sikh organisations opposed the partition of India, viewing the possibility of the creation of Pakistan as inviting persecution. In 1947, it saw heavy conflict between Sikhs and Muslims, and the effective religious migration of Punjabi Sikhs and Hindus from West Punjab and organized ethnic cleansing of Punjabi Muslims from East Punjab.

The Punjab region of the Indian subcontinent has been the historic homeland of the Sikhs. Today, Canada has the largest national Sikh proportion (2.1%) in the world, while the Punjab state in India has the largest Sikh proportion (58%) in the world. With 25–30 millions, Sikhs represent less than 0.3% of the total world population in 2021.

Nader's Indian campaign alerted the British East India Company (EIC) to the extreme weakness of the Mughal Empire and the possibility of expanding to fill the power vacuum. Without Nader, eventual British rule would have come later and in a different form, perhaps never at all – with important global effects.

The persecution of the Sikhs triggered the founding of the Khalsa by Guru Gobind Singh in 1699 as an order to protect their freedom of conscience and religion.

What Sikhs Believe

Sikh ethics emphasise the congruence between spiritual development and everyday moral conduct. Its founder, Guru Nanak, summarized this perspective as: "Truth is the highest virtue, but higher still is truthful living." Sikhism lays emphasis on *Ēk nūr te sab jag upjiā*, 'From the one light, the entire universe welled up.'

Sikhism is a monotheistic and pantheistic religion. Sikhs believe that there exists only one God and that God is simultaneously within everything and is all-encompassing.

In Sikhism, "Ik Onkar" is a fundamental statement of belief, meaning "There is only one God". It is the first line of the Mool Mantar, a central and sacred mantra for Sikhs, emphasising the oneness of God and the unity of all beings. The phrase is also a symbol of Sikh belief and is frequently seen in gurdwaras and Sikh homes.

In Sikhism, the word for God is "Waheguru" ('wondrous teacher'). The Waheguru is considered to be Nirankar ('shapeless'), Akal ('timeless').

Sikhs accept reincarnation and karma concepts found in Buddhism, Hinduism, and Jainism, but do not necessarily infer a metaphysical soteriology such as a state of "heaven" or "nirvana." Reincarnation, also called transmigration of soul, is the rebirth in another body (after physical death), of a person's soul or spirit into the new body. Its occurrence is a central tenet of Sikhism.

The Sikhs believe that the soul has to transmigrate from one body to another as part of an evolution process of the Soul. This evolution of the Soul will eventually result in a union with God upon the proper purification of the spirit. If one does not perform righteous deeds, one's soul will continue to cycle in reincarnation forever.

A being who has performed good deeds and actions in their lives is transmigrated to a better and higher life form in the next life until the soul of the being becomes Godlike. From a human life form, if one performs the proper functions, the person can achieve salvation with God.

God has no gender in Sikhism, but, metaphorically, God is presented as masculine and God's power as feminine. Guru Gobind Singh refers to God as his father, and God's creative power as his mother. In addition, the gurus also wrote in the Guru Granth Sahib that there are many worlds on which the transcendental God has created life.

In Sikh worldview, the everyday world is part of the Infinite Reality, increased spiritual awareness leads to increased and vibrant participation in the everyday world. Guru Nanak described living an "active, creative, and practical life" of "truthfulness, fidelity, self-control and purity" as being higher than the metaphysical truth.

The concept of humanity as elaborated by Guru Nanak refines and negates the "monotheistic concept of self/God", declaring that "monotheism becomes almost redundant in the movement and crossings of love".^[71] Sikh gurus have taught that the human's goal is to end all dualities of "self and other, I and not-I", attain the "attendant balance of separation-fusion, self-other, action-inaction, attachment-detachment, in the course of daily life".

Who is a Sikh

According to Article I of Chapter 1 of the Sikh Rehat Maryvada, ('code of conduct'), the definition of Sikh is: Any human being who faithfully believes in

- I. One Immortal Being
- II. Ten Gurus, from Guru Nanak Sahib to Guru Gobind Singh Sahib
- III. The Guru Granth Sahib
- IV. The utterances and teachings of the ten Gurus and
- V. The initiation known as the Amrit Sanchar bequeathed by the tenth Guru
- VI. and who does not owe allegiance to any other religion, is a Sikh.

Male Sikhs generally have Singh ('lion') as their last name, though not all Singhs are necessarily Sikhs; likewise, female Sikhs have Kaur ('lioness') as their last name. These unique last names were given by the Gurus to allow Sikhs to stand out and also as an act of defiance to Indian caste system which the Gurus were always against.

Khalsa

Sikhs who have undergone the Amrit Sanchar (initiation) are known as Khalsa from the day of their initiation and they must at all times have on their bodies the FIVE Ks:

1. kesh, uncut hair usually kept covered by a dustar, also known as a turban
2. kara ,an iron or steel bracelet;
3. kirpan, a dagger-like sword tucked into a strap or a waistband;
4. kachera, a cotton undergarment; and

5. kanga, a small wooden comb.

Sikhs strongly believe in the idea of sarbat da bhala ('welfare of all') and are often seen on the frontline to provide humanitarian aid across the world.

Sikhs and God

A key practice by Sikhs is remembrance of the *Naam* (divine name) Waheguru. This contemplation is done through Nam Japna (repetition of the divine name) or Naam Simramn (remembrance of the divine Name through recitation). The verbal repetition of the name of God or a sacred syllable has been an ancient established practice in religious traditions in India, however, Sikhism developed Naam-simran as an important Bhakti practice

Maya, defined as a temporary illusion or "unreality" is one of the core deviations from the pursuit of God and salvation: where worldly attractions give only illusory temporary satisfaction and pain that distracts from the process of the devotion of God. In Sikhism, the influences of ego, anger, greed, attachment, and (Five Thieves) ' are believed to be particularly distracting and hurtful. Sikhs believe the world is currently in a state of Kali ('age of darkness') because the world is led astray by the love of and attachment to maya.

Guru Nanak's teachings are founded not on a final destination of heaven or hell, but on a spiritual union with the *Akal*, which results in enlightenment and liberation within one's lifetime'. , a concept also found in Hinduism. The body takes birth because of karma, but salvation is attained through grace."

The Sikh gurus taught that by constantly remembering the divine name and through selfless service (seva) the devotee overcomes egotism. This, it states, is the primary root of five evil impulses and the cycle of birth and death.

Sikhism considers "an attack on dharam is an attack on justice, on righteousness, and on the moral order generally" and the dharam "must be defended at all costs".

Forgiveness is taught as a virtue in Sikhism, yet it also teaches its faithful to shun those with evil intentions and to pick up the sword to fight injustice and religious persecution.

Sikhism does not differentiate religious obligations by sex. God in Sikhism has no sex, and the Sikh scripture does not discriminate against women, nor bar them from any roles. Women in Sikhism have been in positions of leadership, including leading in wars.

Overview of the Dharmic religions

All four Darmatic religions viz., Jainism, Hinduism, Sikhism and Buddhism, share concepts and doctrines such as karma and re-birth. They do not believe in eternal heaven or hell, or judgement day, and leave it up to individual discretion to choose whether or not to believe in gods, to disagree with core teachings, and to choose whether to participate in prayers, rituals and festivals. They all consider values such as ahimsa (non-violence) to be important, link suffering to craving, individual's actions, intents, and karma, and believe spirituality means to enlightened peace, bliss and eternal liberation.

Jainism differs from both Buddhism and Hinduism in its ontological premises. All believe in impermanence, but Buddhism incorporates the premise of anatta ("no eternal self or soul"). Hinduism incorporates an eternal unchanging atman ("soul"), while Jainism incorporates an eternal but changing jiva. In Jainism, the soul, in its state of ignorance, mistakenly identifies with the body and consequently experiences suffering. When the soul realises its true nature, it attains enlightenment, gaining infinite knowledge and bliss.

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Chapter Five

The Chinese Cultural Heritage

(Editorial Note 1: The Chinese Cultural Heritage falls into two parts: The Chinese Traditional Culture presented in Chapter Five, and Communist China presented in Chapter Five A. The first captures the societal- philosophic history available for study of the total Chinese experience, the second provides the ideology of modern China, and represents an alternative evolutionary pathway for the Global Society.)

(Editorial Note 2: Whereas it was convenient to separate out the What We Believe of the different religions into a chapter of its own in our review of the Indian Cultural Heritage, with the Chinese, I have found it more organic to reflect their equivalents in and at the appropriate parts of their historical narrative. Readers are invited to use the TOC to pick these out if they wish to see them together.)

Overview

The societal development of China emerges in several unique ways.

First and foremost, China has the longest undiluted history of essentially the same ethnic people, extending over 4,000 years.

Secondly, this took place in the same compact region, maximising both societal and territorial development, so that today they occupy the third largest contiguous land area in the world by nation. As a result, they have been (until 2023 when overtaken by India) the largest single ethnic-group in the world – one out of every five humans has been Chinese.

And thirdly, while rich in religious and folk culture, their forte has been to apply philosophy and ideology to their societal development. For some two thousand years, they organised and managed their societies by the rules and precepts of Taoism-Confucianism,

Despite a fractious history of dynastic wars, they developed a strong, mature and cohesive traditional culture, uniquely applying moral philosophy to social and civil management, until these showed their limitations in the modern world.

By the mid 19th century, however, China found itself out-competed from the outside world by rapidly merchandising and industrialising Europe-USA (also referred to as “the West”), who had developed societally within a framework of democratic-capitalist open market principles.

The latter were, however showing severe social cracks through unfettered competition, exploitation of workers, and lack of international collaboration. The rich were getting richer and the poor (workers) poorer. Their penetration of the Chinese world was both exploitative and invasive. They were soon imitated by a resurgent Japan.

A gigantic China stood weakened by the inflexibilities of its historic societal system. A new generation of young “firebrand” intellectuals made a mighty effort to “modernise” by abolishing dynastic rule and constituting China a democratic Republic of China in 1912. But the Nationalists in power failed to make an impact, the Second World War intervened, and the first and only national elections took place in 1947.

The Russian October 1917 peasant revolution was the first signal of the European social eruption, and the rise of Marxist. At that point, the Chinese population, about 450 million, was almost entirely peasant, and almost all were living below the subsistence line by even-then standards. A section of the young firebrands took notice.

They formed the Chinese Communist Party in 1921, and by 1934 had established a "Chinese Soviet Republic" in several locations. Then, after the Second World War, in just 5 years of bloody revolution, on 1 October 1949, they installed Marxist-Leninist Communism (with Chinese adaptations, known as Maoism) as the driving ideology of China. The latter has since become the second most powerful political and technological power on this earth.

While Russia has reverted to constitutional democracy as 15 smaller political entities, China remains the archetypal global communist state, representing one of the two working options for the future evolution of Man.

There are signs of the two worlds coming together, at least in the economic sphere. One common ground is since the 1980s has been China's inclusion of elements of the market economy. The other is the acceptance of socialism in the democratic world as a working societal ideal. The Chinese version of the "socialist marketplace" bids fair to being an alternative market of the future.

The Chinese Cultural Heritage for our purposes therefore comes in two parts: Tradition Chinese Culture and Modern China.

Traditional Chinese Culture

Huangdi

It is today generally accepted that Chinese civilisation began when, in about 2070 BCE in the Bronze age, the Yellow Emperor founded the Chou dynasty in the Yellow River valley, near Henan. It was a legendary event, with archaeological support.

As a cosmological deity, the Yellow Emperor is known as the "Great Emperor of the Central Peak" and as the "Yellow Emperor with Four Faces" (Huangdi). In old accounts the Yellow Emperor is identified as a deity of light and thunder, and as one and the same with the "Thunder God" who in turn, as a later mythological character, is distinguished as the Yellow Emperor's foremost pupil.

The Yellow Emperor is also known as the Yellow Thearch and by his Chinese name Huangdi. He is included among the legendary Three Sovereigns and Five Emperors. He is revered as a deity individually or as part of the Five Regions Highest Deities in Chinese folk religion.

Regarded as the initiator of Chinese culture, he is traditionally credited with numerous innovations – including the Chinese lunar calendar, the compass needle, wooden houses, boats, and "the earliest forms of writing". Huangdi's traditional reign dates begin in either 2698 or 2697 BCE spanning one hundred years exactly, later accepted by the twentieth-century promoters of a universal calendar starting with the Yellow Emperor.

Huangdi's cult is first attested in the Warring States period and became prominent in the early Han dynasty, when he was portrayed as the originator of the centralised state, as a cosmic ruler, and as a patron of esoteric arts. A large number of texts were thus attributed to him.

What Chinese Believe

Tian

Chinese theology comes in a mix of different interpretations according to the Chinese classics and Chinese folklore, and specifically Confucianism, Taoist and other philosophical formulations.

It is fundamentally monistic, that is to say it sees the world and the gods of its phenomena as an organic whole, or cosmos, which continuously emerges from a simple principle.

This is expressed by the concept that "all things have one and the same principle". This principle is commonly referred to as Tian, a concept generally translated as "Heaven", referring to the northern culmen and starry vault of the skies and its natural laws which regulate earthly phenomena and generate beings as their progenitors.

Ancestors are therefore regarded as the equivalent of Heaven within human society, and therefore as the means connecting back to Heaven which is the "utmost ancestral father". Chinese theology may be also called Tiānxué, ("study of Heaven").

The universal principle that gives origin to the world is conceived as transcendent and immanent to creation

The Chinese idea of the universal God is expressed in different ways. There are many names of God from the different sources of Chinese tradition, reflecting a "hierarchic, multi-perspective" observation of the supreme God.

Chinese scholars emphasise that the Chinese tradition contains two facets of the idea of God: one is the personified God of popular devotion, and the other one is the impersonal God of philosophical inquiry. Together they express an "integrated definition of the monistic world".

Interest in traditional Chinese theology has waxed and waned over the various periods of the history of China. From the 1980s onward, public revivals have taken place. The Chinese believe that deities or stars, are arranged in a "celestial bureaucracy" which influences earthly activities and is reflected by the hierarchy of the Chinese state itself.

Having waned in influence during most of the imperial period in the early twentieth century, Huangdi became a rallying figure for Han Chinese within modern Chinese nationalism.

Societal-Facultative Development

While the anchors of Chinese civilisation lie in their monistic concepts, the development of their civilisation has been essentially societal, with their gods and their philosophies sharing equal occupation of their dynasties. The result is a composite world of separate streams of worship and practical application, with free and easy identification of the influences of both worlds to explain successes and failures. This leads me to capture the historical line of development as the most convenient way to reflect Chinese societal-facultative development. In its history, we find the total societal-facultative contribution of a complete and coherent civilisation.

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Earliest Chinese Dynasties

Xia Dynasty (2070-1600 BCE)

It is today generally accepted that Chinese civilisation began when, in about 2070 BCE in the Bronze age, the Yellow Emperor, Huangdi, founded the Chou dynasty in the Yellow River valley, at Eritou near Henan. It was a legendary event, with archaeological support.

More importantly, the Erlitou site has the earliest evidence for an elite who conducted rituals using cast bronze vessels, which would later be adopted by the Shang and Zhou.

Shang Dynasty (2070-1600 BCE)

Archaeological evidence, bronzes, as well as transmitted texts attest the historical existence of the Shang dynasty. Findings have been found at Yinxu (near modern Anyang, Henan), the site of the final Shang capital during the Late Shang, including the earliest written record of the Chinese (oracle bones) so far discovered: dating from 1250 –1046 BCE.

A series of at least twenty-nine kings reigned over the Shang dynasty. Throughout their reigns, the capital city was moved six times. The final and most important move was to Yin, around 1250 BCE. The term Yin dynasty has been synonymous with the Shang dynasty in history, although it has lately been used to refer specifically to the latter half of the Shang dynasty.

Scholars are often hesitant to associate settlements that are contemporaneous with the Shang dynasty. The evidence is inconclusive in proving how far the Shang realm extended from Anyang. The leading hypothesis is that Anyang, ruled by the same Shang in the official history, coexisted and traded with numerous other culturally diverse settlements in the area that is now referred to as China proper.

Zhou Dynasty (1046–256 BCE)

The Zhou dynasty emerged in China's "pre-dynastic" Iron age and was is the longest-lasting dynasty in Chinese history, though its power declined steadily over the almost eight centuries of its existence.

In the late 2nd millennium BCE, the Zhou dynasty arose in the Wei River valley of modern western Shaanxi Province, where they were appointed Western Protectors by the Shang. The ruler of the Zhou defeated the Shang and took over most of the central and lower Yellow River valley. They enfeoffed their relatives and allies in semi-independent states across the region. Several of these states eventually became more powerful than the Zhou kings.

The kings of Zhou invoked the concept of the Mandate of Heaven to legitimise their rule. Like Shangdi (Huangdi), Heaven (Tian) ruled over all the other gods, and it decided who would rule China. It was believed that a ruler lost the Mandate of Heaven when natural disasters occurred in great number, and when, more realistically, the sovereign had apparently lost his concern for the people. In response, the royal house would be overthrown, and a new house would rule, having been granted the Mandate of Heaven.

The Zhou established two capitals, with the king's court moving between them regularly. The Zhou alliance gradually expanded eastward into Shandong, south-eastward into the Huai River valley, and southward into the Yangtze river valley.

Early Shang dynasty thought was based what the people could observe around them: day and night cycles, the seasons progressed again and again, and even the moon waxed and waned until it waxed again. Thus, it reflected the order of nature, in which the dominant view of time was a linear progression. Ancestor worship was present and universally recognised.

When the Shang were overthrown by the Zhou a new political, religious and philosophical concept was introduced called the Mandate of Heaven.

What Chinese Believe

Mandate of Heaven

According to this doctrine, Heaven (Tian) bestowed its mandate on a virtuous ruler.

This ruler, the Son of Heaven, was the supreme universal monarch who ruled Tianxia (all under heaven", the world).

If a ruler was overthrown, this was interpreted as an indication that the ruler was unworthy and had lost the mandate. It was also a common belief that natural disasters such as famine and flood were divine retributions, bearing signs of Heaven's displeasure with the ruler, so there would often be revolts following major disasters as the people saw these calamities as signs that the Mandate of Heaven had been withdrawn.

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Spring and Autumn period (722–476 BCE)

In 771 BCE, the Zhou were defeated by rebel states and barbarians. The rebel aristocrats established a new ruler, beginning the second major phase of the Zhou dynasty, the Eastern Zhou period, which is divided into the Spring and Autumn and the Warring States periods.

The reduced political authority of the royal house left a power vacuum at the center of the Zhou cultural sphere. The Zhou kings had delegated local political authority to hundreds of settlements, some of them only as large as a walled town. The more powerful states tended to conquer and incorporate the weaker ones, so the number of states declined over time. By the 6th century BCE most small states had disappeared by being annexed and just a few large and powerful principalities remained.

Some southern states, such as Chu and Wu, claimed independence from the Zhou, who undertook wars against some of them. Many new cities were established in this period and society gradually became more urbanised and commercialised. Many famous individuals such as Lao Tze, Confucius, and Sun Tzu lived during this chaotic period. The period spawned the Hundred Schools of Thought.

Warfare between states forced the surviving states to develop better administrations to mobilise more soldiers and resources. Within states there was constant jockeying between elite families. For example, the three most powerful families in the Jin state—Zhao, Wei and Han—eventually overthrew the ruling family.

Warring States period (476–221 BCE)

Seven prominent states remained, during the 5th century BCE. The years in which these states battled each other is known as the Warring Years period. Though the Zhou king nominally remained as such until 256 BCE, he was largely a figurehead.

As territories were annexed, they were now governed under an administrative system of commanderies and prefectures. This system had been in use elsewhere since the Spring and Autumn period, and its influence on administration would prove functional.

The Hundred Schools of Thought

The Hundred Schools of Thought of classical Chinese began blossoming during the Spring and Autumn period and the subsequent Warring States period. Such influential intellectual movements as Confucianism, Taoism, Legalism and Mohism were founded, partly in response to the changing political world. The first two philosophical thoughts would have an enormous influence on Chinese culture.

The era in which they flourished was one of turbulence in China, fraught with chaos and mass militarisation, but the extraordinary fact was that Chinese philosophy (political thinking) was developed and patronised by competing bureaucracies. This phenomenon has been called the Contention of a Hundred Schools of Thought.

The intellectual landscape of this era was characterised by itinerant scholars, who were often employed by various state rulers as advisers on the way of government, war, and diplomacy. Often, members and traditions of the same school had little in common other than the same influential figure that their beliefs were based on.

Although much of Chinese philosophy began in the Warring States period (475–221 BCE), elements of Chinese philosophy had existed for several thousand years. Some can be found in the I Ching (Book of Changes), an ancient compendium of divination, which dates back to at least 672 BCE.

It was a period of ferment, renaissance and free-for-all. It would be a Han dynasty scholar further down the road who looked back on the Warring States era and grouped the thinkers into the major philosophical schools, Confucianism, Taoism, and Legalism, along with philosophies that later fell into obscurity, like Agriculturnism, Mohism, Chinese Naturalism and Logicians. Even in modern society, Confucianism is still a dominant creed of behaviour.

Qin Dynasty (221-206 BCE)

The state of Qin became prominent in the waning decades of the Warring States period, conquering and eventually driving Zhou from its place in the Han River valley. Qin imitated the administrative reforms of the other states, thereby becoming a powerhouse.

Its final expansion began during the reign of Ying Zheng, ultimately unifying the other six regional powers, and enabling him to proclaim himself as China's first emperor, known to history as Qin Shi Huang.

its pivotal status led to "Qin" later evolving into the Western term "China". To emphasise his sole rule, Zheng proclaimed himself "Shi Huangdi", "First Emperor. The "Huangdi" title derived from the Yellow Emperor became the standard for subsequent rulers. The empire was a centralised bureaucratic monarchy, a governing scheme which dominated the future of Imperial China. The system consisted of commanderies made up of counties and progressively smaller divisions, each with a local leader.

Many aspects of society were informed by Legalism, as a state ideology. In legal matters this philosophy emphasised mutual responsibility in disputes and severe punishments for crime, while economic practices included the general encouragement of agriculture and repression of trade. Reforms occurred in weights and measures, writing styles and metal currency, all of which were standardised.

Traditionally, Qin Shi Huang is regarded as ordering a mass burning of books - and live burial of scholars under the guise of Legalism, though contemporary scholars express doubt on the historicity of the event.

Despite its importance, Legalism was supplemented in non-political matters by Confucianism for social and moral beliefs.

The Qin administration kept exhaustive records on their population, collecting information on their sex, age, social status and residence. Commoners, who made up over 90% of the population, "suffered harsh treatment" as they were often conscripted into forced labour for the empire's construction projects. This included a massive system of imperial highways in 220 BCE, which ranged around 4,250 miles (6,840 km) altogether.

Other major projects were the campaign against the northern peoples (210s BCE), reportedly with 300,000 troops.

Qin Shi Huang's combined numerous ancient walls into what came to be known as the Great Wall of China and oversaw the building of a 500 miles (800 km) straight highway between northern and southern China.

After Qin Shi Huang's death the Qin government drastically deteriorated, and eventually capitulated in 207 BCE after the Qin capital was captured and sacked by rebels, which would ultimately lead to the establishment of the Han Empire.

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Taoism

Lao Tze @ Lao Tzu

Lao Tze @ Lao Tzu is a semi-legendary philosopher, thought to have authored the content of the Tao Te Ching (Laozi), the foundational text of Taoism.

Modern scholarship generally regards his opus to be a collaboration. Traditional accounts have him as Li Er, born in the 6th century BCE, in the state of Chu, during the Spring and Autumn period, a contemporary of Confucius. He served as the royal archivist for the Zhou court. One legend has him composing the Tao Te Ching in a single session before retiring into the western wilderness.

What Chinese Believe

The Tao Tee Ting

Taoism or Daoism is the natural way of the universe, primarily as conceived of in East Asian religion. This seeing of life cannot be grasped as a concept. Rather, it is seen through actual living experience of one's everyday being. The concept is represented by the Chinese character, Tao, which has meanings including 'way', 'path', 'road', and sometimes 'doctrine' or 'principle'.

Lao Tze is a Chinese philosopher credited with founding the philosophical system of Taoism. The Tao-Te-Ching is translated as "The Way of Virtue" or "The Classic of the Way and Virtue", the work which exemplifies his thought.

Taoism does not have a God. There is no omnipotent being beyond the cosmos, who created and controls the universe. In Taoism the universe springs from the Tao, and the Tao impersonally guides things.

Tao is not a name for a thing, but the underlying natural order of the universe, whose ultimate essence is difficult to circumscribe because it is non-conceptual yet evident in one's being of aliveness. The Tao is "eternally nameless" and should be distinguished from the countless named things that are considered to be its manifestations, the reality of life before its descriptions of it.

The Tao Te Ching describes the Tao as the source and ideal of all existence: it is unseen, but not transcendent, immensely powerful yet supremely humble, being the root of all things. People have desires and free will (and thus are able to alter their own nature). Many act "unnaturally", upsetting the natural balance of the Tao. The Tao Te Ching intends to lead students to a "return" to their natural state, in harmony with Tao.

Wu wei, literally 'non-action' or 'not acting', is a central concept of the Tao Te Ching. The concept can mean "not doing anything", "not forcing", "not acting" in the theatrical sense, "creating nothingness", "acting spontaneously", and "flowing with the moment".

This concept is used to explain harmony with the Tao. The Tao Te Ching uses the term broadly with simplicity and humility as key virtues, often in contrast to selfish action. On a political level, it means avoiding such circumstances as war, harsh laws and heavy taxes.

Taoist thought has informed the development of various practices within the Taoist tradition and beyond, including forms of meditation, astrology, feng-shui, and internal alchemy.

A common goal of Taoist practice is self-cultivation, a deeper appreciation of the Tao, and more harmonious existence. Taoist ethics emphasise such virtues as effortlessness, naturalness, simplicity, and the three treasures of compassion, frugality, and humility.

Although Taoism and Confucianism developed significant differences, they are not seen as mutually incompatible or exclusive. The relationship is characterised as one of mutual influence, with long-running discourses shared between Taoists and Buddhists.

Many Taoist denominations recognise deities, often ones shared with other traditions, which are venerated as superhuman figures exemplifying Taoist virtues. They can be roughly divided into two categories of "gods" and xian (or "immortals"). Xian are immortal beings with vast supernatural powers, also describing a principled, moral person. Since Taoist thought is syncretic and deeply rooted in Chinese culture for millennia, it is often unclear which denominations should be considered "Taoist".

The status of 'Taoist master', is traditionally attributed only to clergy in Taoist organisations. Though generally lacking motivation for strong hierarchies, Taoist philosophy has often served as a theoretical foundation for politics, warfare, and Taoist organisations. Taoist secret societies during the late Han attempting to create what has been characterised as a Taoist theocracy.

Today, Taoism is one of five religions officially recognised by the current Chinese government. It is considered a major religion in Taiwan and also has significant populations of adherents throughout the Sinosphere and Southeast Asia.

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Confucianism

Confucianism, also known as "Ruism" or "Ru classicism", is a system of thought and behaviour originating in ancient China and is variously described as a tradition, philosophy, religion, a theory of government, or way of life.

Confucianism developed from teachings of Confucius (551–479 BCE), during a time that was later referred to as the Hundred Schools of Thought. Confucianism was suppressed during the Legalist and autocratic Qin dynasty (221–206 BCE), but survived during the Han dynasty (206 BCE – 220 CE), Confucian thought edged out the "proto-Taoist" as the official ideology, while the emperors mixed both with the realist techniques of Legalism.

The Confucian Canon

Confucius considered himself a transmitter for the earlier values which he claimed had been abandoned in his time. Thus, the Confucian canon is inclusive the Chinese classics and arts that came before him..

What the Chinese Believe

The Confucian Canon

Confucianism regards the principles contained in the Five Classics the key tenets that should be followed to promote the harmony of the family and the society as a whole.

The **Five Classics** (wu-jing) consist of the
Book of Odes,
Book of Documents,
Book of Changes,
Book of Rites, and the
Spring and Autumn Annals

Together with the Four Books (si-shu), they collectively create the foundation of Confucianism.

The **Four Books** are:
The Doctrine of the Mean,
the Great Learning,
Mencius, and
the Analects

The Five Classics and Four Books were the basis of the civil examination in imperial China and considered the Confucian canon.

There are also the Six Arts practised by scholars long before Confucius but became a part of Confucian philosophy as the: "4 books, 5 classics and 6 arts". Rites, Music, Archery, Chariotry, Calligraphy and Mathematics.

His own substantive work was the Analects, and Mencius was his contemporary's.

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Confucius, the Man

Confucius, (551 – 479 BCE), born **Kong Qiu**, was a Chinese philosopher of the Spring and Autumn period who is traditionally considered the paragon of Chinese sages. Much of the shared culture of China even today originates in the philosophy and teachings of Confucius.

While Tao showed the Way, his philosophical teachings, called Confucianism, presented a body of practical wisdom how societal development could align with and attain it. This is directed comprehensively at the three necessary levels: the collective, the social, and the personal moral. Thus it emphasises the harmony or unity of personal and governmental morality, harmonious social relationships, righteousness, kindness, sincerity, and a ruler's responsibilities to lead by virtue.

He advocated filial piety, endorsing strong ancestor veneration, respect of elders by their children and of husbands by their wives. Confucius recommended a robust family unit as the cornerstone for an ideal government. He championed the Silver Rule: "Do not do unto others what you do not want done to yourself."

It is thought that Confucius was born on 28 September 551 BCE in Zou in modern Shandong. The area was effectively independent under the local lords who ruled from the nearby city of Qufu. His

father was an elderly commandant of the local garrison. Confucius was born into the class of shi between the aristocracy and the common people.

Traditional accounts of Confucius's life relate that his grandfather had migrated the family from Song to Lu. At age 19, he married and had two daughters, one of whom is thought to have died as a child.

Confucius was educated at schools for commoners, where he studied and learned the Six Arts. He is said to have worked in various government jobs during his early 20s, and as a bookkeeper and a caretaker of sheep and horses, using the proceeds to give his mother a proper burial.

Political career

In Confucius's time, the state of Lu was headed by a ruling ducal house, of three aristocratic families. In the winter of 505 BCE, the Ji family rose up in rebellion and seized power from the Ji family, but was subdued.

By then, Confucius had built up a considerable reputation through his teachings, while the families came to see the value of proper conduct and righteousness, so they could achieve loyalty to a legitimate government. Thus, that year (501 BCE), Confucius came to be appointed to the minor position of governor of a town. Eventually, he rose to the position of Minister of Crime. Confucius ordered executions of officials accused of 'five crimes', each worth execution, including 'concealed evilness, stubborn abnormality, eloquent duplicity, erudition in bizarre facts and generosity to evildoers'

Confucius desired to return the authority of the state to the duke by dismantling the fortifications of the city—strongholds belonging to the three families. This way, he could establish a centralised government. However, Confucius relied solely on diplomacy as he had no military authority himself. Eventually, after a year and a half, Confucius and his disciples succeeded in convincing the conflicting families to raze their walls, in 498 BCE.

Soon thereafter, a retainer of the Ji family revolted and immediately launched an attack and entered the capital Lu. Confucius disapproved the use of a violent revolution by principle, even though the Ji family dominated the Lu state by force for generations and had exiled the previous duke. The rebel may have sought to destroy the three hereditary families in order to restore the power of the duke. Whatever the situation may have been, the rebel was considered an upright man who continued to defend the state of Lu, even after he was forced to flee.

Zhong You was one of the disciples of Confucius, and Confucius had arranged for him to be given the position of governor by the Ji family. When Confucius heard of the raid, he requested that the heads of the three families and the duke retreated to the Ji's palace. Confucius ordered two officers to lead an assault against the rebels. At least one of the two officers was a retainer of the Ji family. The rebels were pursued and defeated after the revolt was defeated, the Ji family razed the city walls to the ground. The attackers retreated after realizing that they would have to become rebels against the state and their lord.

Through Confucius' actions, the Ji family officials had inadvertently revolted against their own lord, thus forcing them to having to dismantle the walls of —as it could have harboured such rebels—or confess to instigating the event by going against proper conduct and righteousness as an official. The incident brought to light Confucius' foresight, practical political ability, and insight into human character.

When it was time to dismantle the city walls of the Meng family, the governor was reluctant to have his city walls torn down and convinced the head of the Meng family not to do so. Later on in 498 BCE, a duke of Lu went with an army to attempt to raze its walls to the ground, but he did not succeed. Thus, Confucius could not achieve the idealistic reforms that he wanted including restoration of the legitimate rule of the duke. He had made powerful enemies within the state, due to his successes so far.

Confucius departed his homeland in 497 BCE after his support for the failed attempt of dismantling the fortified city walls of the powerful Ji, Meng, and Shu families. He left the state of Lu without resigning, remaining in self-exile and unable to return as long as his enemies were , alive

Exile

The neighbouring state of Qi was worried that Lu was becoming too powerful while Confucius was involved in the government of the Lu state. According to this account, Qi decided to sabotage Lu's reforms by sending 100 good horses and 80 beautiful dancing girls to the duke of Lu. The duke indulged himself in pleasure and did not attend to official duties for three days.

Confucius was disappointed and resolved to leave Lu and seek better opportunities, yet to leave at once would expose the misbehaviour of the duke and therefore bring public humiliation to the ruler Confucius was serving. Confucius therefore waited for the duke to make a lesser mistake. Soon after, the duke neglected to send to Confucius a portion of the sacrificial meat that was his due according to custom, and Confucius seized upon this pretext to leave both his post and the Lu state.

After Confucius's resignation, he travelled around the north-east and central China. At the courts of these states, he expounded his political beliefs but did not see them implemented.

Return home

Confucius returned home to his native Lu when he was 68, after he was invited to do so by the the chief minister of Lu. Tradition depicts him spending his last years teaching 3,000 pupils, with 72 or 77 accomplished discophiles that mastered the Six Arts. Meanwhile, Confucius dedicated himself in transmitting the old wisdom by writing or editing the Five Classics.

During his return, Confucius sometimes acted as an advisor to several government officials in Lu, on matters including governance and crime.

He died at the age of 71 or 72 from natural causes. Confucius was buried on the bank of the Sisui River, to the north of Qufu City in Shandong Province. Starting as a humble tomb, the cemetery of Confucius had been expanded by emperors since the Han Dynasty. To date, it covers an area of 183 hectares with more than 100,000 graves of the Kong descendants, it is included in the World Heritage List for its cultural and architectural value.

The time of Confucius's life was a formative period in China's intellectual history. His ideas gained in prominence during the Warring States period but experienced a setback during the Quin. Under Emperor Wu of the Han, Confucius's ideas received official sanction, with affiliated works becoming mandatory readings for career paths leading to officialdom.

During the (later) Tang and Song dynasties, Confucianism developed into a system known as Neo-Confucianism and later as New-Confucianism. From ancient dynasties to the modern era, Confucianism has integrated into the Chinese social fabric and way of life.

Writings

Traditionally, Confucius is credited with having authored or edited many of the ancient texts including all of the Five Classics and Four Books. However, modern scholars exercise caution at least some of the texts and philosophy associated with him were of a more ancient origin. Aphorisms, concerning his teachings were compiled in the Analects but not until many years after his death.

They are traditionally believed to have been either written, edited or commented by Confucius or one of his disciples. Starting in the Han dynasty they became the core of the Chinese classics on which students were tested in the imperial examination system.

The Analects, also known as the Sayings of Confucius, is an ancient text composed of sayings and ideas attributed to Confucius and his contemporaries, traditionally believed to have been compiled by his followers.

During the early Han, the *Analects* was merely considered to be a commentary on the Five Classics. By the dynasty's end the status of the *Analects* had grown to being among the central texts of Confucianism.

Far from trying to build a systematic or formalist theory, he wanted his disciples to master and internalise older classics, so that they can capture the ancient wisdoms that promoted "harmony and order", to aid their self-cultivation to become perfect men. The *Analects* would allow them to relate the moral problems of the present to past political events.

Confucianism as Religion

Although some Chinese people follow Confucianism in a religious manner, many argue that its values are secular and that it is less a religion than a secular morality.

Proponents of religious Confucianism argue that despite the secular nature of Confucianism's teachings, it is based on a worldview that is religious. Confucius was considered more of a humanist than a spiritualist. His discussions on afterlife and views concerning Heaven remained indeterminate, and he is largely unconcerned with spiritual matters often considered essential to religious thought, such as the nature of souls.

What Confucius Taught

Individual virtue

Confucius believed that the welfare of a country depended on the moral cultivation of its people, beginning from the nation's leadership. He believed that individuals could begin to cultivate an all-encompassing sense of virtue through **ren** and that the most basic step to cultivating ren was filial piety—primarily the devotion to one's parents and older siblings.

He taught that one's individual desires do not need to be suppressed, but that people should be educated to reconcile their desires via **li**, rituals and forms of propriety, through which people could demonstrate their respect for others and their responsible roles in society. Confucius also believed that a ruler's sense of **de** or 'virtue', was his primary prerequisite for leadership.

The worldly concern of Confucianism rests upon the belief that human beings are fundamentally good, and teachable, improvable, and perfectible through personal and communal endeavor, especially self-cultivation and self-creation. Confucian thought focuses on the cultivation of virtue in a morally organised world.

With particular emphasis on the importance of the family and social harmony, rather than on an otherworldly source of spiritual values, the core of Confucianism is humanistic. Confucianism as a philosophical system regards "the secular as sacred". Confucianism transcends the dichotomy between religion and humanism, considering the ordinary activities of human life—and especially human relationships—as a manifestation of the sacred, because they are the expression of humanity's moral nature, which has a transcendent anchorage in Tian.

While the Confucian concept of Tian shares some similarities with the concept of a deity, it is primarily an impersonal absolute principle like the Tao or Brahman. Most scholars and practitioners do not think of tian as a god, and the deities that many Confucians worship do not originate from orthodox Confucianism. Confucianism focuses on the practical order that is given by a this-worldly awareness of Tian.

Some of the basic Confucian ethical concepts and practices include ren, yi, li, and zhi. Ren is the essence of the human being which manifests as compassion. It is the virtue-form of Heaven. Yi is the upholding of righteousness and the moral disposition to do good. Li is a system of ritual norms and propriety that determines how a person

should properly act in everyday life in harmony with the law of Heaven. Zhi is the ability to see what is right and fair, or the converse, in the behaviors exhibited by others. Confucianism holds one in contempt, either passively or actively, for failure to uphold the cardinal moral values of ren and yi.

Politics – Statecraft

Confucius's political thought is based upon his ethical thought. He argued that the best government is one that rules through "rites" (li) and morality, and *not* by using incentives and coercion. He explained that this is one of the most important analects: "If the people be led by laws, and uniformity sought to be given them by punishments, they will try to avoid the punishment but have no sense of shame. If they be led by virtue, and uniformity sought to be given them by the rules of propriety, they will have the sense of the shame, and moreover will become good." (*Analects* 2.3, tr. This "sense of shame" is an internalisation of duty.

Confucianism prioritises creating a harmonious society over the ruler's interests, opposes material incentives and harsh punishments, and downplays the role of institutions in guiding behavior as in Legalism, emphasising moral virtues instead.

Because his vision of personal and social perfections was framed as a revival of the ordered society of earlier times, Confucius is often considered a great proponent of conservatism, but a closer look at what he proposed often shows that he used (and perhaps twisted) past institutions and rites to push a new political agenda of his own: a revival of a unified royal state, whose rulers would succeed to power on the basis of their moral merits instead of lineage.

While Confucius supported the idea of government ruling by a virtuous king, his ideas contained a number of elements to limit the power of rulers. He argued for representing truth in language, and honesty was of paramount importance. Even in facial expression, truth must always be represented.

Confucius believed that if a ruler leads correctly by action, orders would be unnecessary in that others will follow the proper actions of their ruler. In discussing the relationship between a king and his subject (or a father and his son), he underlined the need to give due respect to superiors. This demanded that the subordinates must advise their superiors if the superiors are considered to be taking a course of action that is wrong. Confucius believed in ruling by example, if you lead correctly, orders by force or punishment are not necessary.

Mencius

The ***Mencius*** is an anthology of conversations and anecdotes attributed to the Confucian philosopher Mencius (371 –289 BCE). The book is one of the Chinese Thirteen and explores Mencius's views on the topics of moral and political philosophy, often as a dialogue with the ideas presented by Confucius. The book documents Mencius's travel across the states, and his philosophical conversations and debates with those he meets on his journey. A number of scholars suggest that the text was not written by Mencius himself, but rather by his disciples. The text is believed to have been written during the late 4th century BC.

The ***Mencius*** expands on the Confucian claims about the necessary practices of a good ruler. This consists of 'virtue politics' or politics that is sensitive to the suffering of others', where enacted policies extend benevolence. Such policies result in a fair material distribution and protection for marginalised members of society. Confucius and Mencius contend that a good ruler must gain the devotion of the people through the exertion of benevolence and goodness; Mencius asserts Confucian ethics as the basis for achieving an ideal state.

Chinese Folk Religion

Chinese folk religion comprises a range of traditional religious practices of the Han Chinese, including the Chinese diaspora. This includes the veneration of shens ('spirits') and ancestors, and worship devoted to deities and immortals who can be deities of places or natural phenomena, of human behaviour, or progenitors of family lineages. Stories surrounding these gods form a loose canon of Chinese mythology. These practices had been blended with Buddhist, Confucian, and Taoist teachings to form the popular religious system which has lasted in many ways until the present day. The PRC generally tolerates popular religious organisations, but has suppressed or persecuted those that they fear would undermine social stability.

A Confucian revival began during the Tang dynasty (618–907 CE). In the late Tang, Confucianism further developed in response to the increasing influence of Buddhism and Taoism and was reformulated as Neo-Confucianism. This reinvigorated form was adopted as the basis of the imperial examinations and the core philosophy of the scholar-class in the Song dynasty (960–1297 CE). The abolition of the examination system in 1905 marked the end of official Confucianism.

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Han Dynasty (206 BCE – 220 CE)

The Han dynasty was an imperial period ruled by the House of Liu. The dynasty was preceded by the short-lived Qin dynasty, and it was succeeded by the Three Kingdoms period (220–280 CE). The dynasty was briefly interrupted by the Xin dynasty (9–23 CE) and is thus separated into two periods—the Western Han (206 BCE – 9 CE) and the Eastern Han (25–220 CE). Basically, it coincides with the Roman empire.

Spanning over four centuries, the Han dynasty is considered a **golden age** in Chinese history. The majority ethnic group of modern China refer to themselves as the "Han Chinese".

The Han emperor presided over the Han government but shared power with both the nobility and the appointed ministers who came largely from the scholarly gentry classes. The Han empire was divided into areas directly controlled by the central government called commanderies as well as semi-autonomous kingdoms.

Emperor Wu (141–87 BCE) brought the empire to its zenith. He disenfranchised the majority of imperial relatives, appointing military governors to control their former lands. As a further step, he extended patronage to Confucianism, which emphasised stability and order in a well-structured society. He also strengthened the fiscal structure of the dynasty.

The coinage minted by the central government in 119 BCE remained the standard in China until the Tang dynasty (618–907 CE). The period saw a number of limited institutional innovations. To finance its military campaigns and the settlement of newly conquered frontier territories, the Han government nationalised private salt and iron industries in 117 BCE, creating government monopolies that were later repealed during the Eastern period. During the Han dynasty, the territory of China was extended to most of China proper and far west.

There were significant advances in science and technology during the Han period, including the emergence of paper-making. Art, culture and science all advanced to unprecedented heights.

The Han conquered the Tarim Basin, helping to establish the Silk Road. Emperor Wu also launched successful conquests into the northern Korean peninsula. To the south, various small kingdoms far beyond the Yangtze River Valley were formally incorporated into the empire.

Migration and military expeditions led to the cultural assimilation of the south. It also brought the Han into contact with kingdoms in Southeast Asia, introducing diplomacy and trade.

After 92 CE, palace eunuchs involved themselves in the dynasty's court politics, engaging in power struggles between various consort clans. Imperial authority was seriously challenged by large Taoist religious societies. The palace eunuchs were massacred by military officers, allowing members of the aristocracy and military governors to become warlords and divide the empire. The Han dynasty came to an end in 220 CE when Cao Pi of Wei usurped the throne. Migration and military expeditions led to the cultural assimilation of the south. It also brought the Han into contact with kingdoms in Southeast Asia, introducing diplomacy and trade.

The Han dynasty's long period of stability and prosperity consolidated the foundation of China as a unified state under a central imperial bureaucracy, which was to last intermittently for most of the next two millennia

Xin Dynasty (9-23 CE)

After the death of the Emperor Wu of Han, the ruling Liu family was increasingly beset by factional struggles. In contrast, the Wang family grew powerful and its leading member Wang Mang used his influence to act as regent for several young puppet emperors. He embarked on a programme of building and learning, creating much positive publicity and propaganda for himself. He openly presented himself as champion of Confucian virtues, and as guiding force of the empire.

in 9 CE, Wang Mang usurped the throne and officially proclaimed the Xin dynasty. He claimed the Mandate of Heaven. Wang Mang started an extensive program of land and other economic reforms, including the outlawing of slavery and land nationalisation and redistribution. These programmes, however, were never supported by the landholding families, because they favoured the peasants.

The instability of power brought about chaos, uprisings, and loss of territories. This was compounded by mass flooding of the Yellow River, which displaced large numbers of farmers. Wang Mang was eventually killed by an enraged peasant mob in 23 CE.

After Wang's death, the Han dynasty was restored by a distant Han descendant, and therefore, the Xin dynasty is often considered dividing it into the Western (or "Former Han") and the Eastern (or "Later Han").

Eastern Han

The Han dynasty was restored with the support of landholding and merchant families *east* of the former capital Xi'an, thus named Eastern Han.

Former glories of the dynasty were reclaimed, with brilliant military and cultural achievements⁰. The empire further expanded the conquests across the Pamirs to the Caspian sea, thus reopening the Silk Road and bringing trade, foreign cultures, along with the arrival of Buddhism and Roman emissaries.

The Eastern Han dynasty was one of the most prolific eras of science in ancient China, notably the historic invention of paper-making and the numerous scientific and mathematical contributions. by the famous polymath Zheng Heng

Six Dynasties

Three Kingdoms (220–280 CE)

By the 2nd century CE, the empire declined amidst land acquisitions, invasions and feuding, ushering in an era of warlords. Three states emerged, trying to gain predominance and reunify the land, giving this historical period its name. The classic historical novel Romance of the Three Kingdoms relates to the events of the period.

The warlord Cao Cao reunified the north in 208 CE, and in 220 CE his son accepted the abdication of the Emperor of Han, initiating the Wei dynasty. Soon, Wei's rivals Shu and Wu proclaimed their independence. This period was characterised by a gradual decentralisation of the state that had existed during the Qin and Han dynasties, and an increase in the power of great families.

In 266 CE, the Jin dynasty overthrew the Wei and later unified the country, but this union was short-lived.

Jin dynasty (266–420 CE)

The Jin dynasty reunited China proper for the first time since the end of the Han, ending the Three Kingdoms. However, the Jin dynasty was severely weakened and lost control of northern China. In 317 CE, the Jin prince based in modern-day Nanjing became emperor and continued the dynasty, now known as the Eastern Jin, which held southern China for another century. Prior to this move, historians refer to the Jin dynasty as the Western Jin.

Sixteen Kingdoms (304–439 CE)

Northern China fragmented into a series of independent states known as the Sixteen Kingdoms, most of which were founded by non-Han peoples who were ancestors of the Turks, Mongols, and Tibetans. Many had been “sinicised” long before. In fact, some of them, had already been allowed to live in the frontier regions within the Great Wall since late Han times.

During this period, warfare ravaged the north and prompted large-scale Han Chinese migration south to the Yangtze River Basin and Delta.

Northern and Southern dynasties (420–589 CE)

In the early 5th century CE, China entered a period known as the Northern and Southern dynasties. In the south, the Eastern Jin gave way finally to the Chen. Each of these Southern dynasties were led by Han Chinese ruling families and used modern Nanjing as the capital. They held off attacks from the north and preserved many aspects of Chinese civilisation, while northern barbarian regimes began to sinicise.

In the north the last of the Sixteen Kingdoms was extinguished in 439 CE by the Northern Wei, a kingdom founded by a nomadic people, the Xianbei who unified northern China. These regimes were dominated by Xianbei families. During this period most Xianbei people adopted Han surnames, eventually leading to complete assimilation into the Han.

Buddhism spread throughout the land. In southern China, fierce debates about whether Buddhism should be allowed were held frequently by the royal court and nobles. By the end of the era, Buddhists and Taoists had become much more tolerant of each other.

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Mid-imperial China

Sui Dynasty (581–618 CE)

The short-lived Sui dynasty was a pivotal period in Chinese history. Founded in 581 CE, the Sui went on to conquer the Southern Chen in 589 CE to reunify China, ending three centuries of political division.

The Sui pioneered many new institutions, including the government system of imperial examinations for selecting officials from commoners, and improved the furbing system of army conscription, as well

as the equal-field system of land distributions. These policies, which were adopted by later dynasties, brought enormous population growth, and amassed excessive wealth to the state.

Buddhism took root as a prominent religion and was supported officially. Sui China was known for its numerous mega-construction projects. Intended for grains shipment and transporting troops, the Grand Canal was constructed, linking the capitals to the wealthy southeast and in another route to the northeast border.

The Great Wall was also expanded, while a series of military conquests and diplomatic manoeuvres further pacified its borders. However, the massive invasions of the Korean peninsula failed disastrously, triggering widespread revolts that led to the fall of the dynasty.

Tang Dynasty (618–907 CE)

The Tang dynasty was another **golden age** of Chinese civilisation, a prosperous, stable, and creative period with significant developments in culture, art, literature, particularly poetry, and technology. Buddhism became the predominant religion for the common people. Xian, the national capital, was the largest city in the world.

The first emperor came to the throne on 18 June 618, placed there by his son, Li Shimin, who became the second emperor, Taizong, one of the greatest emperors in Chinese history.

Combined military conquests and diplomatic manoeuvres reduced threats from Central Asian tribes, extended the border, and brought neighbouring states into a tributary system.

Military victories in the Tarim Basin kept the Silk Road open, connecting Chang'an to Central Asia and areas far to the west.

In the south, lucrative maritime trade routes from port cities such as Guangzhou connected with distant countries, and foreign merchants settled in China, encouraging a cosmopolitan culture.

The Tang culture and social systems were observed and adapted by neighbouring countries, most notably Japan.

Internally, the Grand Canal linked the political heartland in Chang'an to the agricultural and economic centres in the eastern and southern parts of the empire.

The prosperity of the early Tang dynasty was abetted by a centralised bureaucracy. The government was organised as “The Three Departments and Six Ministries.” These departments were run by royal family members and landed aristocrats, but as the dynasty wore on, were joined or replaced by scholar officials selected by imperial examinations, setting patterns for later dynasties.

Under the Tang “equal-field system”, all land was owned by the emperor and granted to each family according to household size. Men granted land were conscripted for military service for a fixed period each year, a military policy known as the fubing system. These policies stimulated a rapid growth in productivity and a significant army without much burden on the state treasury.

By the dynasty's midpoint, however, standing armies had replaced conscription, and land was continuously falling into the hands of private owners and religious institutions granted exemptions.

The dynasty continued to flourish under the rule of Empress Wu Zetian, the only official empress regnant in Chinese history,.

The empire reached its zenith and stretched from the Pacific to the Aral Sea, with at least 50 million people.

At the zenith of prosperity of the empire, the An Lushan rebellion from 755 to 763 CE was a watershed event. War, disease, and economic disruption drastically weakened the central imperial government.

In late Tang period the empire was worn out by recurring revolts of the regional military governors, while scholar-officials engaged in fierce factional strife and corrupted eunuchs amassed immense power.

Catastrophically, the Huang Chao rebellion, from 874 to 884 CE, devastated the entire empire for a decade. The sack of the southern port Guangzhou, in 879 CE, was followed by the massacre of most of its inhabitants, especially the large foreign merchant enclaves. By 881 CE, both capitals fell successively.

The reliance on ethnic Han and Turkish warlords in suppressing the rebellions increased their power and influence. Consequently, the fall of the dynasty following Zhu Wen's usurpation led to an era of division.

Five Dynasties and Ten Kingdoms (907–960 CE)

The period of political disunity between the Tang and the Song, known as the Five Dynasties and Ten Kingdoms period, lasted from 907 to 960 CE. During this half-century, China was in all respects a multi-state system.

Five regimes rapidly succeeded one another in control of the traditional Imperial heartland in northern China. Among the regimes, sinicised Turk rulers ruled over an ethnic Han majority in the north. More stable and smaller regimes of mostly ethnic Han rulers coexisted in south and western China over the period, cumulatively constituted the "Ten Kingdoms".

Sixteen prefectures in the north region along today's Great Wall were ceded to the emerging Jhitan Liao dynasty which drastically weakened the defence of China proper. To the south, Vietnam gained independence.

With wars dominating in Northern China, there were mass southward migrations of population, which further enhanced the southward shift of cultural and economic centres in China.

The era ended with the establishment of the Song dynasty in 960 CE, which eventually annihilated the remains of the "Ten Kingdoms" and reunified China.

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Late Imperial China

In 979 CE, the Song dynasty reunified most of China proper while large swaths of the outer territories were occupied by sinicised nomadic empires.

The Khitan Liao dynasty, which lasted from 907 to 1125 CE, ruled over Manchuria, Mongolia, and parts of Northern China. Meanwhile, in what are now the north-western Chinese provinces, tribes founded the Western Xia dynasty from 1032 to 1227 CE.

Within the Liao Empire the northern tribes revolted against their overlords to establish the Jin dynasty in 1115 CE. The remnants of the Liao court members fled to Central Asia to found the Qara Khitai empire (Western Liao) dynasty.

In 1127 CE, the Jin dynasty sacked the Northern Song dynasty. Later the entire north of China was conquered. The survived members of Song court regrouped and initiated the Southern Song dynasty which ruled territories south of the Huai river.

In the ensuing years, the territory and population of China were divided between the Song dynasty, the Jin dynasty and the Western Xia dynasty.

The era ended with the Mongol conquest as Western Xia fell in 1227 CE, the Jin in 1234 CE and finally the Southern Song in 1279 CE.

Song Dynasty (907-1279 CE)

Despite its military weakness, the Song dynasty is widely considered to be the **high point of classical Chinese civilisation**

Facilitated by technological advancement, Song had reached a level of sophistication probably unseen in world history before its time. The population soared to over 100 million and the living standards of common people improved tremendously due to improvements in rice cultivation and the wide availability of coal for production.

The capital cities of Kaifeng and subsequently Hangzhou were both amongst the most populous in the world for their time, and encouraged vibrant civil societies unmatched by previous Chinese dynasties.

Although land trading routes to the far west were blocked by nomadic empires, there was extensive maritime trade with neighbouring states, such as in South East Asia, which facilitated the use of Song coinage as the de facto currency of exchange. Giant wooden vessels equipped with compasses travelled throughout the China Sea and northern Indian Ocean. The concept of insurance was practised by merchants to hedge the risks of such long-haul maritime shipments. With prosperous economic activities, the historically first use of paper currency emerged.

The Song dynasty was considered to be the **golden age** of great advancements in science and technology of China. Inventions such as the hydro-mechanical astronomical clock, the first continuous and endless power-transmitting chain, wood-block printing and paper money were all invented during the Song dynasty, further cementing its status.

By the mid-to-late 13th century, the Chinese had adopted the dogma of Neo-Confucianism philosophy. Enormous literary works were compiled during the Song dynasty. The invention of printing further facilitated the spread of knowledge. Culture and the arts flourished.

The Song dynasty was also a period of major innovation in warfare. Gunpowder, while invented in the Tang dynasty, was first put into practical use on the battlefield by the Song army, inspiring a succession of new firearms and siege engines.

During the Southern Song dynasty, as its survival hinged decisively on guarding the Yangtze and Huai from the north, the first standing navy in China was assembled in 1132 CE.

The advances in civilisation during the Song dynasty came to an abrupt end following the devastating Mongol conquest of the North and subsequently other areas of the empire, during which the population sharply dwindled, with a marked contraction in economy. The Southern Song capital Hangzhou fell in 1276, followed by the final annihilation of the Song standing navy in 1279

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Yuan Dynasty (Kublai Khan) (1271–1360 CE)

The Yuan dynasty was formally proclaimed in 1271, when the Great Khan of Mongol, **Kublai Khan**, one of the grandsons of Ghengis Khan assumed the additional title of Emperor of China and considered his inherited part of the Mongol Empire as a Chinese dynasty.

In the preceding decades, the Mongols had conquered the Jin dynasty in Northern China, and the Southern Song dynasty fell in 1279 after a protracted and bloody war. The Mongol Yuan dynasty became the first conquest dynasty in Chinese history to rule the entirety of China as ethnic minority. The dynasty also directly controlled the Mongol heartland and other regions, while inheriting the largest share of territory of the eastern Mongol empire which roughly coincided with the modern area of China and nearby regions in East Asia.

Following the previous Jin dynasty, the capital of Yuan dynasty was established at Khanbalig, also known as Dadu, modern-day **Beijing**.

The Grand Canal was reconstructed to connect the remote capital city to lively economic hubs in southern part of China, setting the precedence and foundation for Beijing to largely remain as the capital of the successive regimes of the unified Chinese mainland.

In 1304 CE, the emperors of the Yuan dynasty were upheld as the nominal Khagan over western khanates (including the Golden Horde), which nonetheless remained de facto autonomous. The era was known as **Pax Mongolica** when much of the Asian continent was ruled by the Mongols. For the first and only time in history, the Silk Road was controlled entirely by a single state, facilitating the flow of people, trade, and cultural exchange. A network of roads and a postal system were established to connect the vast empire.

Lucrative maritime trade, developed from the previous Song dynasty, continued to flourish, at the two largest ports in the world. Adventurous travellers from the far west, most notably Marco Polo, would settle in China for decades.

The Yuan dynasty was the first ancient economy, where paper currency was the predominant medium of exchange. Its unrestricted issuance in the late Yuan dynasty inflicted hyper-inflation which eventually brought the downfall of the dynasty.

Traditional social structure and culture in China underwent immense transformation during the Mongol dominance. The class of scholar officials and intellectuals, traditional bearers of elite Chinese culture, lost substantial social status. This stimulated the development of culture of the common folks.

Before the Mongol invasion, Chinese dynasties reported approximately 120 million inhabitants; after the conquest had been completed in 1279, the 1300 census reported roughly 60 million people. The Mongols created a system of enslavement causing many to disappear from the census altogether. In the 14th century China suffered additional depredations from epidemics of plague, estimated to have killed around a quarter of the population of China.

Throughout the Yuan dynasty, there was some general sentiment among the populace against the Mongol dominance. Yet rather than the nationalist cause, it was mainly strings of natural disasters and incompetent, corrupt governance that triggered widespread peasant uprisings since the 1340s.

The Battle of Lake Poyang was a naval battle which took place on 30 August – 4 October 1363 against rebel forces during the Red Turban revolution - which led to the fall of the Yuan dynasty. This was the last major battle of the rebellion before the rise of the Ming dynasty. In the same year, his northern expedition army captured the **Yuan capital Khanbalig**.

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Ming Dynasty (1368–1644 CE)

Urbanisation increased as the population grew and as the division of labour grew more complex. Large urban centres, such as Nanjing and Beijing, also contributed to the growth of private industry. In particular, small-scale industries grew up, often specialising in paper, silk, cotton, and porcelain goods. For the most part, however, relatively small urban centres with markets proliferated around the country.

China under the early Ming dynasty was not isolated. Foreign trade and other contacts with the outside world, particularly Japan, increased considerably. Chinese merchants explored all of the Indian Ocean, reaching East Africa.

The Hongwu Emperor, being the only founder who was also of peasant origin, had laid the foundation of a state that relied fundamentally in agriculture. Independent peasant landholders predominated.

The dynasty had a strong and complex central government that unified and controlled the empire. The emperor's role became more autocratic, although Hongwu Emperor necessarily continued to use what he called the Great Secretariat to assist with the immense paperwork of the bureaucracy. It was this same bureaucracy that later prevented the Ming government from being able to adapt to changes in society, and eventually led to its decline.

The Yongle Emperor strenuously tried to extend China's influence beyond its borders by demanding other rulers send ambassadors to China to present tribute. A large navy was built, including four-masted ships displacing 1,500 tons. A standing army of 1 million troops was created. The Chinese armies conquered Vietnam, while its fleet the China seas and the Indian Ocean, cruising as far as the east coast of Africa. Several maritime Asian nations sent envoys with tribute for the Chinese emperor. Domestically, the Grand Canal was expanded and became a stimulus to domestic trade.

The imperial palace in Beijing's Forbidden City reached its current splendour. It was also during these centuries that the potential of south China came to be fully exploited. New crops were widely cultivated and industries such as those producing porcelain and textiles flourished.

Most of what remains of the Great Wall of China today was either built or repaired by the Ming. The brick and granite work was enlarged, the watchtowers were redesigned, and cannons were placed.

Maritime Prohibition

At sea the Ming became increasingly isolationist after the death of the Yongle Emperor. The treasure voyages which sailed the Indian Ocean were discontinued, and the maritime laws were set in place banning the Chinese from sailing abroad.

European traders who reached China in the midst of their age of discovery were repeatedly rebuked in their requests for trade, with the Portuguese being repulsed in 1521 and again in 1522C

Domestic and foreign demands for overseas trade, deemed illegal by the state, led to widespread piracy attacking the southeastern coastline. In addition to raids from Japan, raids from Taiwan and the Philippines also ravaged the southern coasts.

Arrival of Europeans

The Portuguese were finally allowed to settle in Macau in 1557 CE for trade, which remained in Portuguese hands until 1999.

After the Spanish invasion of the Philippines, trade with the Spanish in Manila imported large quantities of Mexican and Peruvian silver to China.

The Dutch entry into the Chinese seas was met with fierce resistance, with the Dutch being chased off the Phenghu Islands in 1622–1624 CE and were forced to settle in Taiwan instead. The Dutch fought the Ming in 1633 and lost, and eventually surrendered after the fall of the Ming dynasty.

In 1556 CE, the Shaanxi earthquake killed about 830,000 people, the deadliest earthquake of all time.

The Ming dynasty intervened deeply in the Japanese invasion of Korea in 1492-1598 CE, which ended with the withdrawal of all invading Japanese forces in Korea, and the restoration of its tradition ally.

Ming's control in Manchuria declined, and the latter broke away and emerged as a powerful, unified state, which later became the Qing dynasty. It went on to subdue a much weakened Korea and conquered Mongolia,

Development of Confucianism

Efforts spread Confucian ideals which became official in many of the royal courts in China, thereby giving Confucianism the first wide-scale test of its dogmas. Two of Confucius's most famous later followers emphasised radically different aspects of his teachings. In the centuries after his death, Mencius and Xunzi both composed important teachings elaborating in different ways on the fundamental ideas associated with Confucius. Mencius (4th century BCE) articulated the innate goodness in human beings as the source of the ethical intuitions that guide people, while Xunzi (3rd century BCE) underscored the realistic and materialistic aspects of Confucian thought, stressing that morality was inculcated in society through tradition and in individuals through training. In time, their writings, together with the *Analects* and other core texts came to constitute philosophic corpus of Confucianism.

This realignment in Confucian thought was parallel to the development of Legalism, which held that humanity and righteousness were not sufficient in government, and that rulers should instead rely on statecraft, punishments, and law. A disagreement between these two political philosophies came to a head in 223 BCE when the Qin state conquered all of China. Emperor Qin Shi abandoned Confucian recommendations which he saw as being against the Legalist idea of centralising the state around the ruler.

Under the Han, Confucianism was made the official imperial philosophy and required reading for civil service examinations in 140 BCE - which was continued nearly unbroken until the end of the 19th century CE.

New-Confucianism

During the Song dynasty, Confucianism was revitalised in a movement known as Neo-Confucianism. Neo-Confucianism was a revival of Confucianism that expanded on classical theories by incorporating metaphysics and new approaches to self-cultivation and enlightenment, influenced by Buddhism and Daoism. The most renowned scholar of this period was Zhu Xi (1130-1200 CE). There are clear Buddhist and Daoist influences in the Neo-Confucian advocacy of "quiet sitting" (meditation) as a technique of self-cultivation that leads to transformative experiences of insight."

In his life, Zhu Xi was largely ignored, but not long after his death, his ideas became the new orthodox view of what Confucian texts actually meant. Modern historians view Zhu Xi as having created something rather different and call his way of thinking Neo-Confucianism. It held sway in China, Japan, Korea, and Vietnam until the 19th century C.

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Qing Dynasty (1644–1912 CE)

Qing dynasty (1644–1912 CE) was the last imperial dynasty in China. Founded by the Manchu, it was the second foreign reign people to rule the entirety of China people and roughly doubled the territory controlled by the Ming. The Manchus resided in the northeastern part of the Ming territory outside the Great Wall. They emerged as the major threat to the late Ming dynasty after they declared the founding of the Qing dynasty in 1636 CE. The Qing dynasty set up the Eight Banners system that provided the basic framework for the Qing military conquest.

A peasant rebellion captured Beijing in 1644 CE. The Manchus seized Beijing, which was made the capital of the Qing dynasty. Several other factions and peasant revolt leaders fought against each other, which, along with innumerable natural disasters (eg. the Great Plague) caused enormous loss of lives, in total as many as 25 million lives.

But the Qing restored China's imperial power and inaugurated another flowering of the arts. The early Manchu emperors combined traditions of Inner Asian rule with Confucian norms of traditional Chinese government and were considered a Chinese dynasty.

The Manchus enforced a 'queue order', forcing Han Chinese men to adopt the Manchu queue hair-style. Officials were required to wear Manchu-style clothing (cangsheng and tangzhuang) and bannerman dress, but ordinary Han civilians were allowed to wear Han clothing. Bannermen could not undertake trade or manual labour; they had to petition to be removed from banner status. They were considered aristocracy and were given annual pensions, land, and allotments of cloth.

The emperor ordered the creation of the Kangxi Dictionary, the most complete dictionary of Chinese characters that had been compiled.

Over the next half-century, all areas previously under the Ming dynasty were consolidated under the Qing.

In 1683 CE, the Qing staged an amphibious assault on southern Taiwan, bringing down the rebel kingdom which was founded by the Ming loyalist after the fall of the Southern Ming, and had served as a base for continued Ming resistance in Southern China.

By the end of the Qianlong Emperor's long reign in 1796, the Qing Empire was at its zenith. The Qing ruled more than one-third of the world's population and had the largest economy in the world. By area, it was one of the largest empires.

Foreign Interference

In the 19th century the empire was internally restive and externally threatened by Western powers.

Opium Wars

The defeat by the British in the First Opium War (1840 CE) led to the Treaty of Nanking (1842 CE), under which Hong Kong was ceded to Britain and importation of opium (produced by British Empire territories) was allowed. Opium usage continued to grow in China, adversely affecting societal stability.

The First Opium War was triggered by the Chinese government's campaign to enforce its prohibition of opium, which included destroying opium stocks owned by British merchants and the British East India Company. The British government responded by sending a naval expedition to force the Chinese government to pay reparations and allow the opium trade. The Second Opium War was waged by Britain and France against China from 1856 to 1860, and consequently resulted in China being forced to legalise the opium trade.

Taiping Rebellion

The Taiping Rebellion (1851–1864 CE), was a Christian religious movement led by the "Heavenly King", Hong Xiuquan, which swept from the south to establish the Taiping Heavenly Kingdom, which controlled roughly a third of China proper for over a decade.

The court in desperation empowered Han Chinese officials to raise local armies. After initial defeats, they crushed the rebels in the Third Battle of Nanking in 1864 CE. This was one of the largest wars in the 19th century in troop involvement; there was massive loss of life, with a death toll of about 20 million.

A string of civil disturbances followed. All rebellions were ultimately put down, but at enormous cost and with millions dead, seriously weakening the central imperial authority. China never rebuilt a strong central army, and many local officials used their military power to effectively rule independently in their provinces.

Boxer Uprising

In the summer of 1900 CE, the Boxer Uprising opposed foreign influence and murdered Chinese Christians and foreign missionaries. The uprising was initiated by a Chinese secret society called the Yihetuan (Righteous and Harmonious Fists) . This group practiced a form of martial arts that resembled boxing, at least to Western eyes. The 'Boxers', as they became known, embarked on an armed campaign to drive all foreigners out of China. When the Boxers entered Beijing, the Qing government ordered all foreigners to leave, but they and many Chinese Christians were besieged in foreign legations.

An Eight Nations Alliance of Japanese, Russian, British, Italian, German, French, American, and Austrian troops was sent to relieve the siege. The court declared war on the Alliance and authorised the Boxers to join with imperial armies. . The Alliance were routed and forced to retreat by the Boxer and the Qing troops. The Alliance formed a second, much larger force and finally reached Beijing. The Empress Dowager evacuated to Xian. The Boxer Protocol ended the war, exacting a tremendous indemnity against the Chinese.

Forts protecting Beijing were to be destroyed, Boxer and Chinese government officials involved in the uprising were to be punished, foreign legations were permitted to station troops in Beijing for their defense, China was prohibited from importing arms for two years and it agreed to pay the foreign powers and indemnity of USD 333 million, which effectually bankrupted the Qing government.

The Qing court then instituted administrative and legal reforms known as the late Qing reforms, including abolition of the examination system. But young officials, military officers, and students debated reform, the overthrow of the dynasty and the creation of a republic.

They were inspired by an emerging public opinion formed by intellectuals such as Liang Qiu Chao and the revolutionary ideas of Sun Yat Sen. A localised military uprising, the Wuchang Uprising, began on 10 October 1911 and soon spread. The Republic of China was proclaimed on 1 January 1912, ending 2,000 years of dynastic rule.

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Editorial Note:

From here on, as we sail into modern times, we drop the “CE”.)

Republic of China (ROC) (1912 -1949)

The Republic of China was established on 1 January 1912, in Nanjing, with a constitution stating the that "[the ROC] shall be a democratic republic of the people, to be governed by the people and for the people."

Sun Yat-sen

Sun Yat-sen (12 November 1866 – 12 March 1925) was a Chinese physician, revolutionary, statesman, and political philosopher.

Sun founded China's first political party, the Kuomintang (KM) and is credited with overthrowing the Qing dynasty. He founded the Republic of China (ROC) and served as the first president of the republic.

Born to a peasant family from Guangzhou, Sun was educated overseas in Hawaii and returned to China to graduate from medical school in Hong Kong. He rose to prominence as the founder of multiple resistance movements. He is considered one of the most important figures of modern China, and his political life featured constant struggles and frequent periods of exile.

After the success of the 1911 Revolution, Sun proclaimed the establishment of the republic, but had to relinquish the presidency to general Yuan Shikai who controlled the powerful Beiyang Army, ultimately going into exile in Japan.

He later returned to launch a revolutionary government in southern China to challenge the warlords who controlled much of the country following Yuan's death in 1916. In 1919, Sun re-constituted the KMT and went on to form the Nationalist Government

In 1923, he invited representatives of the Communist International to help re-organise the KMT along Russian one-party lines and formed the first United Front with the Chinese Communist Party (CCP). He did not live to see his party unify the country. Sun died of gallbladder cancer in 1925.

Uniquely among 20th-century Chinese leaders, Sun is revered in both Taiwan (where he is officially the "Father of the Nation") and in the Peoples' Republic of China (where he is officially the "Forerunner of the Revolution").

His political philosophy, embedded in the ROC constitution known as the Three Principles of the People, sought to modernise China by advocating for nationalism, democracy and the livelihood of the people. In an ethnically harmonious union, it is commemorated as the Chinese national anthem, which he composed.

Yuan Shikai

When the Republic of China was formed, Sun Yat-Sen became president, but he turned power over to Yuan Shikai who commanded the (Beiyang) New Army. Over the next few years, Yuan proceeded to abolish the national and provincial assemblies, and declared himself as Emperor of China.

Yuan's imperial ambitions were fiercely opposed by his subordinates. Faced with the rapidly growing prospect of violent rebellion, he abdicated in March 1916 and died of natural causes in June, the first official president of the Republic of China.

Yuan's death in 1916 left a power vacuum; and the republican government (that had been nearly brought to its knees by his policies) was all but shattered. This opened the way for a warlord era during which much of China was ruled by shifting coalitions of competing provincial military leaders and the (Beiyang faction) government, ushering in a short-lived period of uncertainty.

May Fourth Movement

Intellectuals, disappointed in the failure of the republic, launched the May Fourth Movement in 1919. The movement began as a response to the terms imposed on China by the Treaty of Versailles following World War I. It quickly became a nationwide protest movement. The protests were a moral success as the cabinet fell and China refused to sign the Treaty of Versailles. The latter had awarded the German holdings of Shandong to Japan. Memory of the mistreatment at Versailles has fuelled resentment into the 21st century.

The student protests in Beijing in front of Tiananmen Square on May 4, 1919 sparked nation-wide protests and spurred an upsurge in nationalism. It became a Chinese cultural and anti-imperialist political movement.

The May Fourth demonstrations marked a turning point in a broader anti-traditional New Culture Movement (1915–1921) that sought to replace traditional Confucian values.

Nationalism, patriotism, progress, science, democracy, and freedom were the goals. Imperialism, feudalism, warlordism, autocracy, patriarchy, and blind adherence to tradition were the enemies.

The Chinese started looking "east and west" for inspiration, both from the democratic-capitalist and the authoritarian-socialist worlds as these sought to emerge from the morass of the world war.

Intellectuals struggled with how to be strong and modern and yet Chinese, how to preserve China as a political entity in the world of competing nations, and above all how to catch up and take their rightful place.

One overwhelming fact was that they were an urban movement that espoused populism in an overwhelmingly rural country. Many political and social leaders of the next five decades emerged at this time, including those of the Chinese Communist Party (CCP).

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The Kuomintang (KMT) & CCP

The Kuomintang (KMT), founded by Sun Yat-sen, ruled China from 1927 to 1949, forming the first republican party to do so nationally.

The name of the party translates directly as "National People's Party of China" or "Chinese National Party", and was historically referred to as the Chinese Nationalists.

The Kuomintang traced its roots to the Revive China Society, which was founded in 1895 and merged with several other anti-monarchist societies as the Revolutionary Alliance in 1905. After the overthrow of the Qing in 1911 and the founding of the ROC, the Kuomintang itself was formally established on 25 August 1912. The party played a significant part in the first Chinese National Assembly where it was the majority party.

However the KMT failed to achieve complete control. The post of president was given to Yuan Shikai (see above), as a reward for his part in the revolution.

Yuan Shikai abused his powers. He started ignoring the parliamentary body in making presidential decisions, counter to the constitution, and assassinated its parliamentary leader in 1911.

In July 1913, led by Sun Yat-sen, the KMT staged a 'Second Revolution' to depose Yuan. This failed. Yuan dissolved the KMT in November (whose members had largely fled into exile in Japan) and dismissed the parliament early in 1914. Yuan Shikai proclaimed himself emperor in December 1915.

After the death of Yuan Shikai in 1916, China fractured into many regions controlled by warlords. In exile, Sun Yat-sen and other former KMT members founded several revolutionary parties under various names but with little success. These parties were united by Sun in 1919 under the title "Kuomintang of China". The new party returned to Guangzhou in China in 1920 where it set up a government, but it failed to achieve control of all of China.

Sun returned to China in 1917 to establish a rival government in Guangzhou, but was soon forced out of office and exiled to Shanghai. There, with renewed support, he resurrected the KMT on 10 October 1919, but under the name of the *Chinese* Kuomintang, as the old party had simply been called the Kuomintang. In 1920, Sun and the KMT were restored in Guangdong.

To strengthen the party's position, it accepted aid and support from the Soviet Union and its Comintern. The fledgling Chinese Communist Party was encouraged to join the KMT.

Birth of the CCP

The Chinese Communist Party (CPC or CCP) was founded in Shanghai in 1921, from among the young Chinese intellectuals impacted with nationalism and Russian socialism. They originally existed as a study group working within the Nationalist Party.

The CCP was both a political as well as a revolutionary party. Mao Zedong was a founder member. The CCP joined with the Kuomintang (KMT) in 1924, and the First United Front alliance proved successful working in the same offices.

Chiang Kai-shek

The KMT gradually increased its sphere of influence from its Guangzhou base. Sun Yat-sen died in 1925, and Chiang Kai-shek (1887–1975) became the KMT strong man.

After Sun's death, the party was dominated by Chiang Kai-shek. He had two major motivations. The first was to unite the country, and the second was to terminate the alliance with the CCP.

At first, Chiang Kai-shek succeeded in bringing most of south and central China under its rule in 1926–1927.

From 1926 to 1928, the KMT under Chang Kai-shek successfully unified China in a Northern Expedition against regional warlords, in which he allied with the CCP in their **First United Front**. The warlords included the Beiyang government of Yuan Shikai which overthrew the Qing dynasty in the first place.

The Northern Expedition proved successful and the KMT party came to power throughout China (except Manchuria). Having defeated the warlords in the south and central China, Chiang was able to secure the nominal allegiance of the warlords in the north and establish the Nationalist government.

When Kuomintang forces took Beijing, as the city was the internationally recognized capital, though previously controlled by the feuding warlords, this event allowed the Kuomintang to receive widespread diplomatic recognition in the same year.

The capital was moved from Beijing to Nanjing, the original Ming capital, in order to be closer to the party's strong base in southern China. The KMT governed most of China until it was defeated in the civil war by the Communists in 1949.

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Civil War

In 1927, Chiang instigated the April 12 Incident in Shanghai, in which the Chinese Communist Party and Communist elements of the KMT were purged. That ended the First United Front. Chiang turned on the CCP and relentlessly purged the Communists elements in his New Revolutionary Army (NRA). This was the start of the **Civil War**.

The KMT was unable to stop the invasion by Japan. They went on to lose control most of the coastline and major cities, inclusive of the Second World War, 1937–1945. Chiang Kai-shek secured massive military and economic aid from the United States, and in 1945 became one of the five permanent members of the UN Security Council, with a veto.

The Kuomintang continued to attack the Communists. However, the Japanese invasion constituted the greater prevailing threat, and Chiang was forced to agree to an alliance with the Communists in the total war against the Japanese. This led to a **Second United Front**, which nominally lasted until the Japanese surrendered in 1945.

However, in many situations the alliance was in name only; after a brief period of cooperation, the armies began to fight the Japanese separately, rather than as coordinated allies. Conflicts between KMT and communists were still common during the war, and documented claims of Communist attacks upon the KMT forces, and vice versa, abound.

Taiwan

The Nationalists were slowly routed towards the South. When the Nationalist government forces were defeated by CCP forces in mainland China in 1949, the Nationalist government fled to Taiwan.

The Nationalist government had taken effective control of Taiwan at the end of WW II as part of the overall Japanese surrender - when Japanese troops in Taiwan surrendered to the Republic of China troops there.

The leadership, the remaining army, and hundreds of thousands of businessmen and other supporters, two million in all, had fled to Taiwan. They continued to operate there as the Republic of China (ROC) and dreamed of invading and reconquering what they called "mainland China".

The United States, however, set up a naval cordon after 1950 that has since prevented an invasion in either direction.

The KMT kept the island under martial law for 38 years under rule by Chiang Kai-shek and his son. In the 1990s the ROC underwent a major democratic reform, beginning with the 1991 resignation of the members of the Legislature elected in 1947. As the original leadership died off, it made a peaceful transition to democracy, with full election of parliament in the early 1990s and the first direct presidential election in 1996. After a defeat by the Democratic Progressive Party in 2000, the KMT returned to power in the elections of 2008 and 2012.

Until the early 1970s the ROC was recognised as the government of China, on account of its status as a non-communist nation during the Cold War. This changed in 1971 when the PRC replaced the ROC.

Peoples' Democratic Republic of China

After the War, the KMT lost the (resumed) civil war against the Communist Party of China (CCP) in 1949. The party retreated to Taiwan and remains a major political party there. The CCP declared the People's Democratic Republic of China in Beijing on 1 October 1949,.

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Dynastic China – In Retrospect

The Chinese contribution comes to us in two sets of experiences: (i) the Dynastic Tradition (2040 BCE-1912 CE), (ii) and the Communist Tradition (from 1949 – until today), with the human performance in these periods being our primary evolutionary interests.

They were separated by the inter-regnum of the Republic of China (ROC) (1912-1949) which produced Taiwan (1949 - until today) which in turn offers the experience of the Chinese people (successfully) established as a member country of the (iii) Democratic world.

Immensity

For those approaching Chinese history for the first time, as I have been, the primary reaction is simply the immensity of the civilisation. China's history has been continuous over 4,500 years. As a result, the country is both huge and multi-layered.

Today China occupies a land area of 9,597,000 sq km, third largest in the world. Until overtaken by India in 2023, China has had the largest population in the world, today some 1,416,096,094 people. One in every five humans is Chinese.

Historical Development

One gets a better perspective of the history of China when placed alongside that of Europe (inclusive of European Russia.) The latter evolved over the same period but took a different path. Today, Europe is 10,186,000 sq km big with a population of 744,449,212, not dissimilar to China, and offers an alternate societal development path.

In both cases, civilisation would have started in small groups across the land and this would have followed the standard order of development. Thus, they would proceed from groups, to clans, to

tribes and so on up to states and nations or peoples of common identity. At some stage these would have become a civilisation. In the later stages they would have formed kingdoms, empires, and republics.

Available historical records suggest that Europe actually started first with the Minoan civilisation (BCE 3100). Over time, it developed into a patchwork of kingdoms and monarchies by the 17th century. Previous to that, the Hellenic, Roman and Byzantine empires failed to unite the sub-continent; only the Holy Roman Empire achieved a unification of Europe, but of a cultural-religious nature. Christianity and its moral-societal ideologies have remained the most notable common attributes of Europeans. Napoleon and Hitler both thought like emperors, but both failed. Latterly, European Communism and Stalin would also fail.

Fortunately or not, the European countries turned their imperial ambitions to the colonies, the “outside world”. Europe’s great contribution to mankind has been the scientific revolution followed by industrialisation. The other contribution is “Western culture”, which includes the democratic societal system coupled with capitalist economics. The EU has still to fully take shape. As of today, Europe comprises 44 countries, of which 12 still are sovereign monarchies.

On the other hand, China had 10 major dynasties over the same period, at least six of them occupying the whole country.

Ancient Dynasties

Chinese civilisation originated in and spread out from the valley of the Ho-Hwang Ho (the Yellow River) near Beijing. Chinese history tells us their **Xia** (Chou) dynasty (2040-1600 BCE) came into existence around 4,500 years ago, with Huangdi (God) as the Sovereign. This was followed by the **Shang** dynasty (1600-1050 CBE). This whole period is largely mythical.

The next, the **Zhou** dynasty (1050 – 256 CBE) was the true foundational period of China. They came from Shaanxi in the northwest, conquered the Shang, and were the longest dynasty in history, some 790 years. They instituted the cardinal principle that all emperors, kings, and other rulers did so by the Mandate of Heaven. This period produced the 100 Schools of Thought and China’s greatest philosophers Lao Tze, Confucius and Mencius. The Warring States also took place during the late stages of this dynasty.

Early Imperial

The **Chin** (Quin) dynasty (221-206 BCE) emerged from the Warring States. Though brief, 27 years, (618-97 BCE), it united the country for the first time, with Quin Shi Huang becoming China’s First Emperor. The empire was a centralised bureaucratic monarchy, a governing scheme which dominated the future of Imperial China.. He was the one who truly unified China under one identity, language and culture. The Great Wall was completed and a system of roads linked the country.

The **Han** dynasty (206 BCE – 220 CE) was another golden age, lasting 426 years. The territory of China was extended to most of China proper and far west. Confucianism was officially elevated to orthodox status and was to shape subsequent Chinese civilisation. Under emperor Wu, the Han Empire extended its influence to the states of the Tarim Basin and opened up the Silk Road. To the south, various small kingdoms far beyond the Yangtze River Valley were formally incorporated into the empire. The later Eastern Han (25-250 CE) coincided with the Roman empire, and the first of several Romans were recorded in Chinese sources, coming from the sea route, in 166 CE.

Mid Imperial

The **Tang** dynasty (618-907 CE) was the next unified golden age, lasting some 288 years and 21 emperors. Emperor Taizong is deemed one of China’s greatest emperors. He had created the foundations that allowed the Tang Dynasty to endure for another three centuries. Taizong’s unique approach to wise governance — listening to criticism and being open to reform — that paved the way for his and China’s greatness. The empire reached its zenith and stretched from the Pacific to the Aral Sea, with at least 50 million people.

The **Song** dynasty (907-1278 CE) is widely considered to be the high point of classical Chinese civilisation. Facilitated by technological advancement, Song had reached a level of sophistication probably unseen in world history before its time. The population soared to over 100 million and the living standards of common people improved tremendously due to improvements in rice cultivation and the wide availability of coal for production. There was extensive maritime trade with neighbouring states, such as in South East Asia, which facilitated the use of Song coinage. Historically first use of paper currency emerged and insurance was invented. Gunpowder, invented by the Tang, was applied to warfare, and standing armies replaced conscription. The Song also built the first naval force.

The **Yuan** dynasty (1271-1360 CE) was proclaimed in 1271, when the Great Khan of Mongol, **Kublai Khan**, one of the grandsons of Ghengis Khan, assumed the additional title of Emperor of China and considered his inherited part of the Mongol Empire as a Chinese dynasty. In 1279, the Yuan conquered the Song and for the first time China was ruled by an ethnic minority. The era was known as **Pax Mongolica**. The dynasty controlled the Mongol heartland and the eastern Mongol empire, roughly coinciding with the modern area of China and nearby regions in East Asia. Marco Polo visited China during this time, in 1271.

Late Dynasties

The **Ming** dynasty (1368-1644 CE) founded by Hongwu Emperor, overthrew and succeeded the Yuan, and lasted 276 years under 17 emperors. The dynasty had a strong and complex central government. The Great Secretariat, which assisted with the immense paperwork, later prevented the Ming government from being able to adapt to changes in society, and eventually led to its decline.

At its zenith under Yongle Emperor, China's demanding other rulers send ambassadors to China to present tribute. Vietnam was conquered. A large navy was built, and there was a standing army of 1 million troops. The Chinese conquered Vietnam, while its fleet the China seas and the Indian Ocean, cruising as far as the east coast of Africa. Domestically, the Grand Canal was expanded and became a stimulus to domestic trade. After his death, maritime laws were set in place banning the Chinese from sailing abroad.

European traders who reached China in the midst of their age of discovery were repeatedly rebuked in their requests for trade, with the Portuguese being repulsed until 1557 CE when they were allowed into Macau.

The **Qing** dynasty (1644-1912) was the last of the historical dynasties, lasting 268 years. Founded by the Manchu, it was the second foreign reign people to rule the entirety of China people and roughly doubled the territory controlled by the Ming. The Manchus resided in the northeastern part of the Ming territory outside the Great Wall.

But the Qing restored China's imperial power and inaugurate another flowering of the arts. The early Manchu emperors combined traditions of Inner Asian rule with Confucian norms of traditional Chinese government and were considered a Chinese dynasty. The Qing restored China's imperial power and inaugurated another flowering of the arts. By the end of the Qianlong Emperor's long reign in 1796, the Qing Empire was at its zenith. The Qing ruled more than one-third off the world's population and had the largest economy in the world. By area, it was one of the largest empire.

By the late 1800s, however, the Qing had been challenged and undermined by a number of factors including the high population, food shortages, excessive taxation, government corruption, domestic rebellions and the incursion of foreign imperialists.

The defeat by the British in the First Opium War (1840 CE) led to the Treaty of Nanking (1842 CE), under which Hong Kong was ceded to Britain and importation of opium (produced by British Empire territories) was allowed.

In the summer of 1900 CE, the Boxer Uprising opposed foreign influence and murdered Chinese Christians and foreign missionaries. When Boxers entered Beijing, the Qing government ordered all foreigners to leave, but they and many Chinese Christians were besieged in foreign legations.

, and finally reached Beijing. The Empress Dowager evacuated to Xian. The Boxer Protocol ended the war, exacting a tremendous indemnity against the Chinese, including a penalty of USD 333 millions.

A strong nationalist movement emerged inspired by intellectuals such as San Yet-Sen. The Wuchang Uprising began on 10 October 1911 and soon spread. The Republic of China was proclaimed on 1 January 1912, ending 2,000 years of dynastic rule.

Underlying Factors

Firstly, China today occupies some 6.1% of all land in more or less a solid block, measuring over 6,600 km from the mountains and deserts in the west to the sea in the east. At varying times, it has occupied more or less all of this space. This contiguity concentrated internal focus and development.

Secondly, within China, some 94% of the population are concentrated in 46% of the country to the east. This has compacted the people even more. China's actual overall population density is 151/ sq km; but, more than halved in area by the preceding, we have a mathematical density of 280/ sq km. This is impressive when considered over 5.3 million sq km. The latter area has been known as "China proper".

Thirdly, the people have had a long and connected history, of some 4,000 years, fostering societal development into a rich and mature culture. Given the many sub-groups and their vast geographical diversity it is remarkable that the Chinese cultural identity is at core so homogenous.

Fourthly, China developed a common language and the written word, including printing, early in their history – and kept great records. These factors have been crucial for internal consolidation as well as historical continuity.

Fifthly China developed a strong moral social philosophy and a set of social institutions (Confucianism) early. Not the least of the latter were the (i) precept that the dynastic rule of the emperor was by the Mandate of Heaven, (ii) the creation of commanderies to manage large territories, and (iii) the development of a professional civil service. The system consisted of commandries made up of counties and progressively smaller divisions, each with a local leader, the whole managed by an over-arching bureaucracy. This infrastructure enabled extensive territorial administration and effective tax collection, and bolstered and preserved the rule of dynastic families over long periods.

Sixthly, because of their huge manpower resources and their accumulated wealth from productive agriculture, Chinese rulers wielded enormous strength whether for warfare or engineering projects. It is reported that the emperor Yongle attacked the Manchus with one million men.

And, and lastly, China has had a number of the great leaders who from time to time extended China's boundaries to their outer limits over sufficient durations of time to permit consolidation, as well as cultural reinforcement internally. Thus, although the country broke up many times into kingdoms, states and even pure anarchy, the people remained Chinese.

Entry into the Modern World

China began to emerge from its historic isolation into modern times in the 19th century CE, from inroads by Europeans and invasion by the Japanese. They had missed out on the scientific revolution and industrialisation, and a overwhelming proportion of the population was made up of oppressed peasants living below subsistence level. Its rigid traditional culture proved inhibitive and a weakened empire gave way to a nationalist republican revolution in 1912. The latter failed to unite the country, and a new generation of Chinese turned to the experiences of Russia and Communism.

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Chapter Five A

Communist China

(Editorial Note: For our purposes, China crossed the Third Turning Point of evolution and entered the modern Global Society with its adoption of Communism in 1949 as its cultural philosophy. Politically it would take another quarter century before she became economically and technologically integrated. For our purposes, China offers two streams of evolutionary experience, its historic traditional culture, and the contemporary communist culture.)

Capitalism, Socialism, Communism

Beginnings of Societal Development

The initial scramble for resources in the empty planet would have been a free for all. The stronger human groups would have grabbed the best locations with the best resources in competitive ownership. Initially, conditions allowed exchange and trade through free-enterprise in the pursuit of highest returns, unfettered by the quality, or by social or moral values. Ownership conferred this power, and human aggrandisement did the rest.

Allowing for historical and territorial differences, man's initial productive conquest moved in the free-enterprise or capitalist mould,

Capitalistic Economy

A capitalist economy is a system where private entities control the factors of production like labour, natural resources or capital goods.

Advocates such as Adam Smith and the laissez faire community support capitalism as the most efficient format for economic development, with the allocation of resources left to the market place and determined by the highest rates of return. Its best features are free competition, free trade and lowest cost.

The essence of the system is the private ownership of the means of production, maximising individual profit with minimal regard for social responsibility.

Capitalism promotes initiative, innovation and fosters economic growth. It affords consumers freedom of choice.

Disadvantages

1. ***Income Inequality*:** Capitalism can lead to gross income inequality, as those who are already wealthy have more opportunities to accumulate more wealth.
2. ***Exploitation*:** Capitalism can lead to exploitation of workers, as businesses may prioritise profits over fair wages and working conditions.
3. ***Market Failures*:** Capitalist economies can experience market failures, such as monopolies, environmental degradation, etc
4. ***Boom-and-Bust Cycles*:** Capitalist economies can experience boom-and-bust cycles, leading to economic instability and uncertainty.

Dialectic Materialism

Georg Wilhelm Friedrich Hegel (1770-1831) was a German philosopher who first generalised the "dialectic" as the process inherent in all development. Progress took place by the resolution of positive and negative tensions to a next stage in progress.

By synthesising Hegel's dialectic with philosophical materialism, Karl Marx (1818-1883) and Fredrich Engels (1820-1895) established dialectical materialism. It proposes that the world is material, that all phenomena are the result of matter in motion, and that the world's evolution is the product of a dialectical process driven by internal contradiction. The philosophy became the official state philosophy of the Soviet Union and other Marxist-Leninist states.

Dialectic materialism quickly became seen as the driving force of man's quest for competitive survival, ie productive development. The contradictions of capitalistic objectives and the growing weight of social needs interlocked. It was the belief of social philosophers that the latter would triumph and overthrow capitalism in revolutionary upheaval leading to peace and equality for all in a new order.

By its sufficiency of explanation, dialectic materialism was and is labelled by its principal practitioners, the socialists and communists, as atheistic.

Das Kapital

"Das Kapital" is a foundational theoretical work by Karl Marx published in three volumes between 1867 and 1883. The book is a comprehensive critique of capitalism, and its ideas have had a profound impact on modern thought, offering a vision for a socialist alternative.

Main Arguments

1. Labor Theory of Value: Marx argues that the value of goods and services is determined by the labour required to produce them, rather than by market forces or supply and demand.
3. Exploitation of Workers: Marx argues that capitalists exploit workers by paying them less than the value of the goods and services they produce, thereby generating profits.
4. Accumulation of Capital: The process by which capitalists accumulate wealth and power through the exploitation of workers.
5. Class Struggle: Marx sees history as a struggle between different social classes, with the bourgeoisie (capitalists) exploiting the proletariat (workers).
6. Inevitability of Socialist Revolution: Marx predicts that the contradictions and injustices of capitalism will ultimately lead to a socialist revolution, in which the proletariat will overthrow the bourgeoisie and establish a socialist society.

Labour Theory of Value

According to Marx, it was not the pressure of population that drove wages to the subsistence level but rather the existence of a large army of unemployed, which he blamed on the capitalists. Of its nature, capital only employed economic units to the last that yielded a net marginal return, and ignored those beyond that could not be profitably employed.

He maintained that within the capitalist system, labour was a mere commodity that could gain only subsistence wages. Capitalists, however, could force workers to spend more time on the job than was necessary to earn their subsistence and then appropriate the excess product, or surplus value, created by the workers.

Karl Marx **held** that human labour was the source of economic value. The capitalist pays his workers less than the value their labour has added to the goods. This compensation accounts for only a mere portion, equivalent to the worker's means of subsistence. The remainder is "surplus labour," and the value it produces is "surplus value." To make a profit, Marx argued, the capitalist appropriates this surplus value, thereby exploiting the labourer.

Oppression of the Workforce

The seed of the dialectic materialism in the capitalist system lay in the above oppression of the workforce, which in time must build up the revolutionary forces that would overthrow capitalism.

The liquidity of money and its easy accumulation as wealth reached the extremes of its effects in the concentration of power in the rich, and the abuse of resources for pure profit as against social need. In the market place, the human being was treated as a commonality, quite regardless of its needs.

Un-fetted capitalism resulted in oppression of the mining and industrial workforce and, and the serfdom and enslavement of the peasantry. Millions were left in squalid unemployment outside the wage system.

Socialism and Communism – Dictatorship of the Proletariat

Marx identified two phases of communism that would follow the predicted overthrow of capitalism. The first would be a transitional system, the dictatorship of the proletariat, in which the working class would control the government and economy yet still find it necessary to pay people according to how long, hard, or well they worked, and the second would be fully realised communism—a society without class divisions or government, in which the production and distribution of goods would be based upon the principle “From each according to his ability, to each according to his needs.”

Marx’s followers, especially the Russian revolutionary Vladimir Ilyich Lenin (1848-1924) took up this distinction. He asserted that socialism corresponded to Marx’s first phase of communist society and communism proper to the second.

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Dictatorship of the Proletariat - Russia

U.S.S.R. (Russia)

In October 1918 (“the “October Revolution”), Lenin and the Bolshevik wing of the Russian Social-Democratic Workers’ Party seized power, amidst fragmented authoritarian tsarist political changes which included a new Duma, assorted worker representation, and the involvement of a new intelligentsia.

The Union of Soviet Socialist Republics (U.S.S.R), also known as the Soviet Union or just Russia, was officially established on December 30, 1922, following the Russian Revolution and subsequent civil war.

It was the world’s first socialist state. It was formed by the union of the Russian, Ukrainian, Belorussian, and Transcaucasian Soviet Socialist Republics. The U.S.S.R. was the successor to the Russian Empire of the tsars. The four socialist republics were established on the territory of the former empire: Additional union republics (Soviet Socialist Republics) were set up in subsequent years.

When Germany invaded Russia in June 1941, the latter became a member of the Allies. It eventually conquered and occupied Eastern Europe. It created a string of Communist satellite countries, including Eastern Germany, forming the Communist or Eastern Bloc in the Cold War.

Over the years, the European satellite states disengaged themselves. As for the Soviet Union itself, as of 1990, it was made up of 20 autonomous republics, 8 autonomous provinces, 10 autonomous districts, 6 regions, and 114 provinces.

The U.S.S.R. was by far the largest country in the world, occupying an area of 22,307, 815 sq km, with a population of 296,582,638 people. It extended more than 10,900 kilometres. The most westerly point was on the Baltic Sea and the easternmost was on the Bering Straits. From north to south the U.S.S.R. extended some 2,800 miles.

We may add that the Soviet Union also established the Comintern or Communist International to promote and support communism world-wide, from 1919 to 1943. They played a part in the birth of communism in China.

The Soviet Union was dissolved on December 31, 1991, when it was replaced by 15 independent countries, including the Russian Federation (or Russia proper) as the core of the original. The dissolution was marked by a series of events, including the failed coup attempt in August 1991, declarations of independence by various republics, and the establishment of the Commonwealth of Independent States (CIS).

The rise and collapse of the U.S.S.R over 75 years of the last century was the most spectacular and convulsive societal development of the planet up to that point in time.

Driven by ideology, but mismanaged by man, the dictatorship of the proletariat failed. It failed because it forgot the objectives of serving the proletariat. Its leaders diverted into Cold War confrontation and technological competition for supremacy. They seriously under-catered for the consumption needs of the people. And they simply suppressed the latter, diverting huge resources for repressive and extermination systems.

Inevitably, the multi-ethnic populations across the face of the earth would show cracks of nationalism and discontent, as even the repressive state machinery exceeded the span of human control. The death lolls were horrific. Above all, the political leaders went corrupt. The Soviet Union went into economic stagnation, with no future as such and no internal will.

Lenin

Vladimir Ilyich Ulyanov Lenin (1870-1924), better known as Vladimir Lenin, was a Russian revolutionary, politician and political theorist who was the founder and first head of government of Soviet Russia from 1917 until his death in 1924, and of the Soviet Union from 1922 until his death.

As the founder and leader of the Bolsheviks, Lenin led the October Revolution which established the world's first socialist state. His government won the Russian Civil War and created a one-party-state under the Communist Party. Ideologically a Marxist, his developments to the ideology are called Leninism.

Joseph Stalin

Lenin was succeeded by Joseph Stalin (1878-1953), who took over as General Secretary of the Central Committee of the All-Union Communist Party of the Soviet Union (Bolsheviks) from 1922 and of the Communist Party of the Soviet Union from 1934 to 1953, his death.

Stalin was Minister of the Armed Forces of the Soviet Union from 1941 (he conquered Berlin) and Chairman of the Council of Ministers of the Soviet Union until his death in 1953. Stalin was the virtual dictator of the Soviet Union. He was a paranoic, and a megalomaniac.

Stalin left neither a designated successor nor a framework within which a peaceful transfer of power could take place. Malenkov, Beria, and Khrushchev emerged as the party's dominant figures. The system of collective leadership was restored, and measures introduced to prevent any one member from attaining autocratic domination.

Reforms to the Soviet system were immediately implemented. Economic reform scaled back mass construction projects, placed a new emphasis on house building, and eased the levels of taxation on the peasantry to stimulate production. The new leaders sought rapprochement with Yugoslavia and a less hostile relationship with the U.S. and they pursued a negotiated end to the Korean War in July 1953. The antisemitic purges ceased. A mass's amnesty for certain convicts was issued, halving the country's inmate population, and the state security and Gulag systems were reformed.

After the Soviet Union was dissolved, evidence from the Soviet archives was declassified. This contained official records of 799,455 executions (1921–1953), around 1.5 to 1.7 million deaths in the Gulag, some 390,000 deaths during the “de-kulakisation” forced resettlement (farmland collectivisation programme), and up to 400,000 deaths of persons deported during the 1940s, with a total of about 3.3 million officially recorded victims in these categories. According to historians approximately 1 millions of these deaths were “purposive” while the rest happened through neglect and irresponsibility.

The deaths of at least 3.5 to 6.5 million persons in the Soviet famine of 1932-33 are sometimes, though not always, included with the victims of the Stalin era. Stalin has also been accused of genocide in the cases of forced population transfers of ethnic minorities across the Soviet Union.

Shortly after his death, the Soviet Union went through a period of de-Stalinisation. Malenkov denounced the Stalin personality cult. Then, Khrushchev denounced both his mass repression and his personality cult.

Khrushchev's de-Stalinisation process ended when he was replaced as leader by Leonid Brezhnev in 1964; the latter introduced a level of re-Stalinisation within the Soviet Union. In 1969 and again in 1979, plans were proposed for a full rehabilitation of Stalin's legacy but on both occasions were halted due to fears of damaging the USSR's public image. Gorbachev saw the total denunciation of Stalin as necessary for the regeneration of Soviet society.

After the fall of the Soviet Union in 1991, Boris Yeltsin continued Gorbachev's denunciation of Stalin. His successor Vladimir Putin did not seek to rehabilitate Stalin but emphasised the celebration of Soviet achievements under Stalin's leadership rather than the Stalinist repressions.

The Comintern, also known as the "Third International," The Comintern, also known as the Communist International, was a global organization established by Lenin in 1919 to promote world revolution and unite national communist parties under a Marxist-Leninist ideological basis, reflecting the aims of Soviet foreign policy.

Dissolution of the Soviet Union

Communism has been largely, if not exclusively, identified with the form of political and economic organisation developed in the Soviet Union and adopted subsequently in the People's Republic of China and other countries ruled by communist parties.

It is not often one gets to peer into the massive history that this event represents, nor appreciate its potential impact on history. I have therefore captured some details for the record. Some 15 new states, all formerly a single communist country or political grouping were born and declared themselves independent in the short months of Apr 1990 to Dec 1991.

Table 5A.1
Split of the USSR

SERIAL	COUNTRY	SIZE (km	POP (million)	FORM	OTHER
1	Kazakhstan	2,724,900	20,975,271	republic	Muslim
2	Kyrgyzstan	199,945	7,100,000	republic	Muslim
3.	Tajikistan	143,100	10,077,000	republic	Muslim
4.	Turkmenistan	491,210	7,057,841	republic	Muslim
5	Uzbekistan	444,103	37,030,884	republic	Muslim
	Central Aasia	4,0003,258	76,350, 229		
6	Belarus	207,600	9,155,978	dictatorship	Christian
7	Moldovia	33,843	2,512,758	republic	Christian
8.	RUSSIA	17,098, 242	140,171,015	dictatorship	Multi-ethnic
	Eastern Europe	17,943, 385	199,500,942		
10	Estonia	45,339	1,331,796	republic	Secular
11.	Latvia	64,562	1,882,200	republic	Christian
12.	Lithuania	65,300	2,859,718	republic	Christian
	Baltic States	175,201	5,998,274		
13	Amenia	29,743	2,976,800	republic	Chriistian
14	Azerbaijan	86,600	10,127,145	dictatorship	Muslim
15.	Georgia	69,700	3,688,600	republic	Christian
	South Caucasus	186,043	16,831,096		
16	TOTAL USSR	22,307,815	296,582,638		
17	TOTAL RUSSIAN FEDERATION	17,098, 242	140,171,015		
18	% 17 of 16	76.7	47.3		

https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Post-Soviet_states

[https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/List_of_countries_by_GDP_\(nominal\)_per_capita](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/List_of_countries_by_GDP_(nominal)_per_capita)

The breakup was the most convulsive event in our history so far - and set the scale of coming societal changes, bearing in mind China has embarked on the same path and has so far succeed in pushing the dialectic communist state as viable evolutionary option.

In contrast, Poland and the rest of the Warsaw Pact countries (as well as Mongolia) were, from at least 1953 to 1989 or 90, officially independent countries that were allied to the USSR, but were not part of the USSR.

Russian Federation

After the split, the Russian Federation, now known simply as Russia, retains 76.7% of the former territory, and at 17,098,242 sq km is still the country with the largest land area. However, with a population of 146,028,325, it has dropped to No 9 position, with both India and China peaking at the top with around 1,400 million and USA third at. 340,110,988 people.

One may note that Russia is counted as a country of Europe. In fact, Russia is a transcontinental country – it spans both Europe and Asia. 77% of Russia's land mass is in Asia, and 23% is in Europe. On the other hand, about 110 million of the 140 million people, or 80%, live in the European part.

At 77% of its total present area, which gives 13,165,646 sq km, Russia in Asia is bigger than China, although with only a population of 28,034,203.

On the other hand, at 23% of its total present area as above, Russia makes up 40% of the land surface of Europe. It is the biggest country in Europe by area.

The European part of Russia has a population of approximately 110 million people, which is about 80% of Russia's total population. Russia is also the most populous country in Europe.

Overall, Russia after the split is still the largest country in the world, encompassing more than one-eighth of the Earth's inhabited land area. Russia extends across eleven time zones, and has the most borders of any country in the world, with sixteen sovereign nations.

As a federation, Russia comprises 46 oblasts or provinces, all of which are in Europe, and 22 republics, besides cities.

Russia has the world's largest reserves of mineral and energy resources, and is the largest producer of oil and natural gas in the world. Russia has the world's largest forest reserves, and its lakes contain about one-quarter of the world's fresh water.

The total collapse of the Soviet Union in 1991 took many by surprise. The fundamental factors that contributed to collapse, including economic stagnation and the overextension of the military, were rooted in Soviet policies, but the Cold War and the U.S. policy of containment played a role as well.

Corruption was believed to be rampant; productivity was extremely low and the Soviet Union focused too much on macroeconomic products like military hardware and building factories versus making consumer goods to improve people's lives. The growth of nationalism was a major cause for the disintegration of the Soviet Union.

Global Backdrop

At this point, we might make a few summary observations as backdrop for

. (a) The Soviet Union was formed on 30 Dec 1922. As of 1990, including expansions, it comprised 20 autonomous republics, 8 autonomous provinces, 10 autonomous districts, 6 regions, and 114 provinces. The Soviet Union had a total land area of 22,307,815 sq km, more than twice that of China today at 9,706,961 sq km. It was the world's largest country, with a population of 296,582,638. It was one a single totalitarian state.

. (b) As of the last days of the last millennium, the Soviet Union had dissolved. It had reverted to 15 autonomous states with a reduced combined area of 5,209,573 and population of 15,641,162. The Russian Federation (Russia) remained the largest core unit, with a total area of 17,098,242 (76.7%) and population of 140,171,015 (47.3%). Of the 15, 12 are republics and 3 are dictatorships.

. (c) For 2025, Russia has a projected GDP (ppp) per capita of USD 48,957 (No 45), as against Czechoslovakia at USD 74,976 (No 17)

. (d) For 2025, China has a projected GDP (ppp) per capita of USD 28,008 (No 73) as against Kazakhstan at USD 43,610 (No 49).

. (e) For 2025, Singapore has a projected GDP (ppp) per capita of USD 153,509 (No 3) as against USA at USD 89,678 (No 9).

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Dictatorship of the Proletariat – China

Birth of the CCP

The revolutionary leaderships of the Chinese Communist Party (CPC or CCP) emerged from the common ground of young Chinese intellectuals of the post-Qin post-Confucian reform worlds, heavily impacted with nationalism and Russian socialism.

The Chinese Communist Party, founded in Shanghai, originally existed as a study group working within the confines of the First United Front with the Nationalist Party

The CCP was actually formed in 1921 by Chen Duxiu and Li Daz hao with the help of the Far Eastern Bureau of the Russian Communist Party (Bolsheviks) and Far Eastern Bureau of the Communist International. Those two men and others had come out of the May Fourth Movement. The CCP was founded as both a political party and a revolutionary movement.. Mao Ze-Dong adopted Marxism–Leninism while working as a librarian at Peking University, and in 1921 became a founding member of the CCP. They began organising labour unions in the cities.

The CCP joined with the Kuomintang (KMT) in 1924, and the First United Front alliance proved successful working in the same offices.

First United Front

From 1926 to 1928, the KMT under Chang Kai-shek successfully unified China in a Northern Expedition against regional warlords in which he allied with the CCP in their First United Front. The latter warlords included the Beiyang government of Yuan Shikai which overthrew the Qing dynasty in the first place.

Fresh from the success to overthrow the warlords, Chiang Kai-shek turned on the communists, who by now numbered in the tens of thousands across China. He marched on Shanghai, a city controlled by communist militias. Although the communists welcomed Chiang's arrival, he turned on them, massacring 5,500 of them in 1927.

After the Chiang Kai-shek turned violent against the communists and ousted them at Shanghai, the CCP was driven underground. That began the Chinese Civil War

Chinese Soviet Republic (CSR)

Many CCP cadres, including Mao, then abandoned their revolutionary activities among China's urban proletariat and went to the countryside, where they were so successful in winning peasant support that they established the Chinese Soviet Republic in southern China.

The Chinese Soviet Republic (CSR) was a state within China, proclaimed on 7 November 1931 by CCP leaders Mao Zedong and Zhu De in the early stages of the Chinese Civil War.

The CSR's government was located in its largest component territory, the Jiangxi Soviet in southeastern China. Other component territories of the CSR included the Shaanxi-Gansu, Sichuan-Shaanxi, and Hai Lufeng Soviets. Mao Zedong was both CSR state chairman and prime minister, and his tenure as commander of a "small state within a state" gave him experience in mobile warfare and peasant organisation. The more productive soviet labour mobilisation under the commune system of agriculture also brought new hope to a starving and oppressed peasantry over a wide area. At the same time, the CCP proceeded to build up the Red Army.

The discontinuous territories of the CSR included 18 provinces and 4 counties under the Communists' control, mainly in the south and in central interior.

The CSR reached its peak in 1933. It governed a population which exceeded 3.4 million in an area of approximately 70,000 square km. The CSR had a central government as well as local and regional governments. It operated institutions including an education system, court system, and education system. The CSR also issued currency.

In addition to militia, its regular army numbered more than 140,000 by the early 1930s -- larger than the armies of most contemporary Chinese warlords, though still smaller than the Nationalist forces. The Chinese Red Army also possessed modern communications equipment, such as telephones, telegraphs, and radios, which most Chinese warlords' armies still lacked

The First Red Army successfully repulsed a series of encirclements the during the first years of the Soviet's existence, but they were eventually defeated by the NRA's fifth attempt between 1933 and 1934. After the Jiangxi Soviet was defeated militarily, the CCP began the Long March towards a new base area in the northwest.

The Long March

The “encirclement campaigns” initiated by the Kuomintang in 1934 forced the CCP to abandon most of the soviets. The CCP (including the leadership of the CSR) embarked on the Long March (1934-35) from southern China to the central-west border region of Shaanxi province. The march was across China's most desolate terrain to the northwest, where they established a guerrilla base at Yan 'an in Shaanxi, which eventually became the capital of the Chinese Communist Revolution.

About 100,000 troops retreated from the Jiangxi Soviet and other bases to a new headquarters in Yan 'an, Shaanxi, traversing some 10,000 kilometres (6,000 miles). About 8,000 troops ultimately survived the Long March.

The First Front Red Army of some 86,000 troops headed west, traveling over the rugged terrain of China's western provinces, including eastern Tibet. The Red Army broke several of Chiang's blockades with heavy losses, and by the time it crossed the Xiang river on 1 December had only 36,000 men left.

On New Year's Day 1935, the Red Army crossed the Wei river , and established Mao's position as de facto leader.

Mao's leadership during the retreat brought him immense prestige and support among many within the otherwise-shattered Communist Party. It marked the beginning of his long ascent to primacy, and would be featured heavily in his public image.

Yan'an is celebrated in CCP historical narratives as the most sacred of revolutionary sites and the birthplace of Mao Zedong Thought.

Second United Front

A complex series of events in 1936 culminated in the Xian Incident in which Chiang Kai-shek was kidnapped and forced to negotiate with the CCP. The CCP offered to abolish the CSR and put the Red Army at the command (nominally) of the Kuomintang in exchange for autonomy and an alliance against Japan. These negotiations were successful, and eventually resulted in the creation of the Second United Front, which suspended the civil war from 1937 to 1945, during the Second Sino-Japanese War – which became the Second World War

This began the Second Sino-Japanese war (1937-45) which merged into the Second World War, and the United Second Front continued (nominally) until the end of the latter.

As part of the Second United Front arrangements, the CSR was officially dissolved on 22 September 1937, and the Yan'an Soviet was reconstituted officially as the Shaan-Gan-Ning and the Jin-Cha Border Regions.

Second Sino-Japanese War

The Second Sino-Japanese war was fought between the (United) Republic of China and the Empire of Japan between 1937 and 1945, following a period of war in Manchuria that started in 1931. It is considered the beginning of World War II in Asia.

Japan invaded China in 1937 in the Second Sino-Japanese War. It became part of World War II when Japan entered that war on the side of the Axis powers. The two Chinese factions united in a Second United Front.

The KMT was the sole ruling party of China from 1928 to 1949 but gradually lost control while fighting the Japanese Empire and the CCP in the Chinese civil War at the same time.

World War II

World War II (1 September 1939 – 2 September 1945) was a global conflict between two coalitions, the Allies and the Axis powers. China was among the former and Japan the latter.

The Chinese and Japanese had been engaged in a war localised to Manchuria since 1931. It erupted into the Second Sino Japanese War in 1937. By 1940, Japan controlled approximately 25% of China's territory and over a third of its population.

When Japan attacked the Allies at Pearl Harbour on 1 December 1941, the Second Sino-Japanese War became part of the world war.

China was recognised as one of the Allied Big Four as a tribute to its enduring struggle against the invading Japanese, and was later considered one of the primary victors in the war. Following the Allied powers' victory, Germany, Austria, Japan, and Korea were occupied, but the latter two not by China. By then, of course,, she had two standing armies, the Nationalist Army and the Red Army.

During World War II, the Japanese invasion extended into various parts of China, including key major cities and seaports along the coast such as Shanghai and Nanjing. They also advanced into the interior, capturing cities like Wuhan and other key strategic locations. Japan controlled major transportation routes like railways and roads, limiting Chinese movement and supply.

For the first time, China was significantly invaded by a foreign people, from the sea. Given the humiliating experiences of the Opium Wars, the Boxer Rebellion and the Versailles Treaty – as well as the most recent Japanese invasion - the young generation of China were resolved never to allow subjection again.

Moreover, they realised that their traditional culture had failed to enable them to develop as successfully as the other major nations. The Chinese per capita for 1952 has been estimated²⁴ at USD 900 for 576 million people (at 2011 USD values), as against USD 2,349 for USA²⁵ for 157 million people, with the vast majority of the peasantry living below the poverty line.

Civil War (Cont'd)

The Chinese Civil War between the Nationalists and the Communists continued, openly or clandestinely, through the 14-year-long Japanese occupation of various parts of the country (1931–1945).

The two Chinese parties nominally formed united front's twice, but it was tenuous at best and disagreements, sometimes violent, between the forces were still common.

Following the defeat of Japan in 1945, the war between the Nationalist government forces and the CCP resumed.

By 1949, the CCP had established control over most of the country. The Communists won the Civil War because they made fewer military mistakes than Chiang, and because in his search for a powerful centralised government, Chiang antagonised too many interest groups in China. Furthermore, his party was weakened in the war against the Japanese.

Meanwhile, the Communists projected themselves as the true nationalists. During the civil war both the Nationalists and Communists carried out mass atrocities, with millions of non-combatants killed by both sides. These included deaths from forced conscription and massacres.

²⁴ - <https://www.ceicdata.com/en/china/gross-domestic-product-per-capita>

²⁵ - <https://countryeconomy.com/gdp/usa?year=1956>

Surrender of Beijing

During the Nationalists' regime, the capital of China had been moved to Nanjing - and temporarily to Chongqing (Chungking) during the war – but it had been Beijing before that, under the Qing dynasty for almost the 400 years preceding. It was the mortal spot to capture.

The People's Liberation Army (PLA), ie the Red Army, now significantly stronger and with the support of the peasantry, was able to defeat the KMT's forces in a series of key battles, including the Liao-Shen Campaign, the Huai-Hai Campaign, and the Ping-Ding-Shan Campaign.

The Nationalist forces defending Beijing, were ultimately forced to surrender to the PLA in early 1949. With Beijing in Communist hands and the KMT's control crumbling, the People's Republic of China (PRC) was proclaimed on October 1, 1949. "Communist China" and "Red China" were two common names for the PRC.

The PLA began to amass troops around the Tianjin area beginning on 2 January 1949 and launched the final assault on Tianjin on 14 January. After 29 hours of fighting, the Nationalist 62nd Army and 86th Army and a total of 130,000 men in ten divisions were either killed or captured. The remainder of the Nationalist troops retreated south on 17 January by sea.

After the fall of Tianjin to the Communist forces, the Nationalist garrison in Beijing was effectively isolated. He came to the decision to negotiate a peace settlement and on 22 January his army was integrated into the Communist forces. On 31 January, the PLA's Fourth Field Army entered Beijing to take over the city which marked the conclusion of the campaign. The KMT's defeat ended its ability to be an effective fighting force on the mainland and they retreated to Taiwan. The US intervened substantially to assist the KMT government re-take the land from the surrendering Japanese, while the Russians delayed withdrawals from Manchuria and other inland locations to facilitate the communists taking over the same –in the end leaving behind Russian arms for them.

Formation of the People's Republic of China (PRC)

Mao's proclamation of the People's Republic of China (PRC) on 1 October 1949 marked the end of the second phase of the Chinese Civil War (or the Chinese Communist Revolution as it is called by the CCP).

Stalin proposed a one-party constitution in 1952 for China. The constitution of the PRC in 1954 subsequently abolished the previous coalition government and established the CCP's one-party system.

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The Chinese Communist Party (CCP)

The Chinese Communist Party (CCP) follows a hierarchical structure based on democratic centralism. This principle dictates that the party operates through a combination of open discussion and unified decision-making, with lower levels deferring to higher levels and the minority to the majority. In China, all authority ultimately resides in the CCP.

Some explanation is meaningful in helping differentiate the personalities at different levels that emerge in this part of the narrative

One Party-State system

The National People's Congress (NPC) is both the CCP's and the country's highest legislative and executive authority. The National People's Congress is composed of deputies elected from the provinces, autonomous regions, municipalities directly under the Central Government, and special administrative regions, and of deputies elected from the armed forces. All the minority nationalities are entitled to appropriate representation. The party controls the nomination and election processes at every level in the people's congress system. The NPC is de facto also the highest decision-making authority of the CCP.

The CCP is not a separate entity from the government, and party leadership often takes precedence over state leadership. There is no formal separation of powers in China, with the NPC serving as both the legislative and executive branches. The NPC is the legislative body that enacts laws, elects the president, and approves the state budget.

The Central Committee, elected by the National Congress, is the highest authority within the party when the National Party Congress is not in session. It is responsible for carrying out party policies and directing party work.

The Politburo, the highest decision-making body of the Chinese Communist Party (CCP), is constituted by a group of 24 top officials elected by the Central Committee. The Politburo's power is further concentrated within the smaller Standing Committee, which is considered an inner cabinet. The Politburo Standing Committee is the most powerful body within the CCP, making key political decisions.

The Central Military Commission oversees the People's Liberation Army (PLA), while the Central Secretariat assists the Central Committee in its work.

The State Council is highest the highest governmental or administrative organ, responsible for implementing laws and policies enacted by the National People's Congress (NPC), and the executive branch that oversees provincial governments and various ministries and commissions.

The State Council's key officials, including the Premier, Vice Premiers, and State Councillors, are appointed by the National People's Congress (NPC) upon nomination by the President. In practice, the Premier is chosen from within the Chinese Communist Party (CCP) leadership.

In essence, the Chinese state system is characterized by the CCP's dominance and control over all aspects of government, with the NPC serving as the primary tool for enacting policies and maintaining power.

This authority structure is mirrored at various levels in different ways (eg. provincial, city, county), Party committees. are responsible for implementing policies and directives at all levels.

CCP Leader

The leader of the Central Committee of the Chinese Communist Party is the highest-ranking official and head of the Party. Since 1982, the General Secretary of the Central Committee is considered the party's leader

There were several name changes until Mao Zedong finally formalised the office of Chairman of the Central Committee. Mao was reckoned as the CCP's actual leader from the Long March onward before formally becoming Chairman in 1943, until his death in 1976. .

In the 1980s, the CCP leadership desired to prevent a single leader from rising above the party, as Chairman Mao had done. Accordingly, the post of CCP Chairman was abolished in 1982. Most of its functions were transferred to the revived post of General Secretary.

Deng Xiaoping was the last and only CCP official to become de facto leader of the CCP and paramount leader of China despite having never served as chairman or general secretary.

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Mao Zedong

The Man

Mao Zedong (1893-1976 CE), also known as Chairman Mao, was a Chinese politician, revolutionary, and political theorist who founded the People's Republic of China (PRC) and led the country from 1949 until his death in 1976. Mao served as the Chairman of the CPC from 1943 until his death, and as the party's de facto leader from 1935. His theories, which he advocated as a Chinese adaptation of Marxist-Leninism, are known as Maoism.

He adopted Marxism–Leninism while working as a librarian at Peking University, and in 1921 became a founding member of the Chinese Communist Party.

After the start of the Chinese Civil War between the Kuomintang (KMT) and CCP in 1927, Mao led the failed Autumn Harvest Uprising, and founded the Jiangxi Soviet. He helped establish the Chinese Red Army and developed a strategy of guerrilla warfare.

In 1935, Mao became leader of the CCP during the Long March. The CCP allied with the KMT during the Second Sino-Japanese War starting in 1937, but China's civil war resumed after Japan's surrender in 1945. Mao's forces defeated the Nationalist government (KMT) which withdrew to Taiwan in 1949.

On September 29, 1949, the Chinese People's Political Consultative unanimously adopted the Common Program as the basic political programme for the country. The founding of the People's Republic of China (PRC) was formally proclaimed by Mao Zedong on October 1, 1949, at 3:00 pm in Tiananmen Square, Beijing.

He initiated land redistribution and industrialisation campaigns, suppressed political opposition, intervened in the Korean War, and began the ideological Hundred Flowers and Anti-Rightist campaigns. In 1958, Mao launched the Great Leap Forward, to transform China from an agrarian to an industrial nation, but its immediate result was the Great Chinese Famine.

In 1966, he initiated the Cultural Revolution, a campaign to remove "counter-revolutionary" elements, marked by violent class-struggle, destruction of historical artifacts, and Mao's cult of the personality.

From the late 1950s, Mao's foreign policy was dominated by a political split with the Soviet Union. During the 1970s he began establishing relations with US and the outside world, but was also involved in the Vietnam War.

In 1976, Mao died after suffering a series of heart attacks and was succeeded as leader by Hua Guofeng and in 1978 by Deng Xiaoping. The CCP's official legacy both praises him and acknowledges he made errors in his later years.

Mao is considered one of the most significant figures of the 20th century. His policies were responsible for a vast number of deaths, with estimates ranging from 40 to 80 million victims, of starvation, persecution, prison labour, and mass executions. He has also been credited with transforming China to a leading world power by advancing literacy, women's rights, basic health care, primary education, and life expectancy.

Under Mao, China's population grew from about 550 million to more than 900 million. Within China, he is revered as a national hero who liberated the country from foreign occupation and exploitation. He became an ideological figurehead and a prominent influence within the international communist movement, inspiring various Maoist organisations.

What is Mao Zedong's Thought

Socialism With Chinese Characteristics

Mao's theories, which he advocated as a Chinese adaptation of Marxism-Leninism, are known as Maoism.

Maoism, officially Mao Zedong Thought, is a variety of Marxism-Leninism that Mao Zedong developed while trying to realise a socialist revolution in the agricultural, pre-industrial society of the Republic of China (ROC) and later the People's Republic of China (PRC)

The difference between Maoism and traditional Marxism–Leninism is that with the former a united front of progressive forces in a class society would lead the

revolutionary vanguard in pre-industrial societies, rather than as in classical theory communist revolutionaries alone. This theory, in which revolutionary praxis is primary and ideological orthodoxy is secondary, represents original urban Marxism–Leninism adapted to pre-industrial China.

Later theoreticians expanded on the idea that Mao had adapted Marxism–Leninism to Chinese conditions, arguing that he had in fact updated it fundamentally and that Maoism could be applied universally throughout the world.

After the Sino-Soviet split of the 1960s, the Chinese and Soviet Communist Parties each claimed to be the sole heir and successor to Joseph Stalin concerning the correct interpretation of Marxism–Leninism and the ideological leader of world communism.

Differences from Marxism

[Maoism and Marxism differ in how the proletariat is defined and in the political and economic conditions would start a communist revolution:

1. For Marx, the proletariat was the urban working class, which was determined in the revolution by the bourgeoisie who overthrew feudalism. For Mao Zedong, the revolutionary class was the millions of peasants he referred to as *the popular masses*. Mao based his revolution upon the peasantry. They possessed, according to him, two qualities: (i) they were poor and (ii) they were a political blank slate; in Mao's words, "[a] clean sheet of paper has no blotches, and so the newest and most beautiful words can be written on it."
2. For Marx, the proletariat revolution was internally fueled by the capitalist mode of production. As capitalism developed, "a tension arises between the productive forces and the mode of production. The political tension between the productive forces (the workers) and the owners of the means of production (the capitalists) would be an inevitable incentive for the proletarian revolution, resulting in a communist society. Mao did not subscribe to Marx's theory of inevitable cyclicity in the economic system. His goal was to unify the Chinese nation and so realise progressive change for China in the form of communism; hence, a revolution was needed at once. I

In 1945, the party's first historical resolution put forward Mao Zedong Thought as the party's unified ideology. It was also incorporated into the party's constitution.

Urban–Rural Divide

The urban–rural divide was the most important division in Maoist China when it came to the distribution of food, clothing, housing and health care. Rural status carried no entitlement to a state ration card, wages or social security. As a result, Maoist China is sometimes described as a dual society. The model of development in Mao's China was to develop heavy industry through the exploitation of the rural population. In order to minimise the cost of staple foods for the urban population, farmers were compelled to sell any agricultural surplus above a specified level to the state at artificially low prices. In some regions the state also ate into the rural grain supply, causing shortages for the locals. The rural population endured the worst of the Great Leap famine, in part because the state could seize as much grain as it needed, even under starvation conditions. The appropriated grain was largely used to feed the urban population, although some of it was exported.

The difference in treatment of urban and rural areas was a major push factor for internal migration, which led to increased restrictions on mobility. The ways to acquire an urban status were limited, including serving in the People's Liberation Army, passing the national university entrance examination or being recruited by an urban work unit as a permanent worker. Because of these restrictions, the rural proportion of the population was higher in 1978 than it had been in 1958.

Maoism emphasises the "revolutionary struggle of the vast majority of people against the exploiting classes and their state structures" as the "people's war". Mobilising large parts of rural populations to revolt against established institutions by guerrilla warfare, Maoist Thought focuses on "surrounding the cities from the countryside".

Maoism views the industrial-rural divide as a major division exploited by capitalism, identifying capitalism as involving industrial urban developed "First World" societies ruling over rural developing "Third World" societies. Maoism identifies peasant insurgencies in particular national contexts as part of a context of world revolution, in which Maoism views the global countryside as overwhelming the global cities. Due to this imperialism by the capitalist urban First World toward the rural Third World, Maoism has endorsed national liberation movements in the Third World.

Mao did not believe education alone would transition from capitalism to communism for three main reasons. (1) the capitalists would not repent and turn towards communism on their own; (2) the rulers must be overthrown by the people; (3) "the proletarians are discontented, and a demand for communism has arisen and had already become a fact."

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Development Programme – First Phase

The CCP having set up the PRC, wasted no time in moving to delivery. The Five-Year Plans were a series of social and economic development initiatives issued since 1953 by the PRC. The first three carried the full impact of China's revolutionary planning, programmes and mistakes.

First Five-Year Development Plan (1953-58)

The First Five-Year Plan was deeply influenced by Soviet methodologies and assistance. Industrial development was the primary goal with Soviet assistance in the form of both funds and experts. China began to develop industries from scratch.

Agriculture, fishing, and forestry were collectivised. Regarding commercial and services industries, the approach was for the government to buy them out, including coercing reluctant sellers if necessary.

Government control over industry was increased during this period by applying financial pressures and inducements to convince owners of private, modern firms to sell them to the state or convert them into joint public-private enterprises under state control.

The Plan strained agricultural production. In terms of economic growth, the First Five-Year Plan was quite successful. China began developing a heavy-industrial base and brought its industrial production above what it had been prior to war. China also raised its agricultural production to above prewar levels, resulting primarily from gains in efficiency brought about by the reorganisation and cooperation achieved through cooperative farming.

Industrialisation also prompted extensive urban growth. By 1956, China had completed its socialist transformation of the domestic economy/

Second Five Year Development Plan (1958-62)

The Second Five-Year Plan was more modest than the first Five-Year Plan, but was de facto abandoned since the beginning of the Great Leap Forward. Several moderate goals were set :

- . (a) to continue industrial construction centred on heavy industry.
- . b) to consolidate and extend the system of collective ownership and ownership by the whole people.
- . © To develop the production of industry, agriculture and handicrafts, and correspondingly transport and commerce, on the basis of socialist transformation.

.(d) To train personnel for construction and strengthen scientific research so as to meet the needs of socialist economic and cultural development.

.(e) To strengthen the national defences and raise the level of material and cultural well-being of the people on the basis of the growth of industrial and agricultural production.

The second plan supported a more balanced development cantering more on light industry than on heavy industry. In addition, the second five-year plan also heralded the decentralisation.

However, China in 1956 faced a severe rural-urban exodus, a lack of foreign investment and a lack of a technological revolution. By the second half of 1955 and the first half of 1956, Mao had begun to encourage more radical policies, demanding that people build socialism "more, faster, better, and more economical".

Mao urged a departure from Soviet-style production and the investment of more resources in light industry, which was in direct contradiction to the First Five-Year Plan.

“Let One Hundred Flowers Bloom”

At some point, Mao Zedong, comfortable in attaining the first phases of his socialist revolution (the dictatorship of the proletariat) announced the “Let One Hundred Flowers Bloom” policy.

The Hundred Flowers Campaign was a period from 1956 to 1957 proposed to "let one hundred flowers bloom in social science and arts and let one hundred points of view be expressed in the field of science". It was a campaign that allowed citizens to offer criticism and advice to the government and the party; hence it was intended to serve an antibureaucratic purpose, at least on the Maoists' part. The aim was both to release criticism and garner new ideas.

The campaign aim was both to release criticism and garner new ideas. However, it resulted in a groundswell of criticism aimed at the Party and its policies by those outside its rank and represented a brief period of relaxation in ideological and cultural control. The result required its own suppression.

Three Red Banners

The Three Red Banners was an ideological slogan in the late 1950s which called on the Chinese people to build a socialist state. The "Three Red Banners" also called the "Three Red Flags," encapsulated the driving force of revolution, and consisted of the **General Line** for socialist construction, the **Great Leap Forward** and the **People's Communes**.

After the first Five Year Plan, the PCR continued its socialist construction by introducing "Three Red Banners Movement". The General Line directed the Chinese people to "go all out, aim high, and build socialism with greater, faster, better, and more economical results." By the end of 1958, nearly all Chinese peasants had been organised into communes averaging 5,000 households each. All privately owned property was taken for or contributed to the communes and people were not allowed to cook their own food and instead ate in communal dining halls.

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Great Leap Forward

The Great Leap Forward was an economic and social campaign from 1958 to 1962, launched to transform the country from an agrarian society to an industrial society through the formation of peoples' communes.

Millions of people died in mainland China during the Great Leap, with estimates based on demographic reconstruction ranging from 15 to 55 million, making it the greatest Chinese and second largest famine in history.

The Great Leap Forward stemmed from multiple factors, including the purge of intellectuals, the surge of less-educated radicals, the need to find new ways to generate domestic capital, rising enthusiasm

about the potential results mass mobilisation might produce, and reaction against the socio-political results of the Soviet's development strategy.

Mao ambitiously sought an increase in rural grain production and an increase in industrial activity. Mao was dismissive of technical experts and basic economic principles, which meant that industrialisation of the countryside would solely be dependent on the peasants.

Grain quotas were introduced with the idea of having peasants provide grains for themselves and support urban areas. Output quotas from the industrial activities such as steel were also used for urban growth.

Local officials competed to fulfil or over-fulfil quotas which were based on Mao's exaggerated claims, collecting non-existent "surpluses" and in particular leaving farmers to starve to death. Higher officials did not dare to report the economic disaster which was being caused by these policies, and national officials, blaming bad weather for the decline in food output, took little or no action.

The major changes which occurred in the lives of rural Chinese people included the introduction of mandatory agricultural collectivisation. Private farming was prohibited, and those people who engaged in it were persecuted. Restrictions on rural people were enforced with public struggle sessions, social pressure, and forced labour.

Giant cooperatives, otherwise known as peoples' communes, were formed. Within a year almost all Chinese villages had been reformed into working communes of several thousand people in size, where people would live and work together as envisioned by an ideal communist society. Rather than build steel mills, small "backyard furnaces" would be used.

However, leading into the Great Leap Forward, China experienced a population boom that strained its food supply, despite rising agricultural yields. Increased yields could not keep pace a population that benefitted from a major decrease in mortality (due to successful public health campaigns and the end of war) and the high fertility rate. The Chinese government recognised the country's dilemma of feeding its rapidly growing population without the means to make significant capital improvements in agriculture. Viewing human labour as an underutilised factor of production, the government intensified the mobilisation of masses of people to increase labour inputs in agriculture and more in industry – but took out proportionately more than it should from agriculture to support the latter.

The results were that normal market mechanisms were disrupted, agricultural food supply fell behind, and people exhausted themselves producing shoddy, unsellable goods. Because of the reliance on the government providing and distributing food and resources and their rapid depletion due to poor planning, starvation appeared even in fertile agricultural areas. From 1960 to 1961, the combination of poor planning during the Great Leap Forward, political movements incited by the government, as well as unusual weather patterns and natural disasters resulted in widespread famine and many deaths.

A significant number of the deaths were not from famine but were killed or overworked by the authorities. According to various sources, the resulting death toll was likely between 20 and 40 million. The steel produced in backyard furnaces at low temperatures proved to be useless. Finally, the peasants hated the lack of privacy and the militarization of their lives.

The Great Leap Forward, begun in 1958, was mostly abandoned by early 1962. Membership in communes was gradually reduced in the early 1960s, with some private property ownership and enterprise again being allowed. The communes continued until being dismantled in the early 1980s under Deng Xiaoping

The already strained Sino-Soviet relationship deteriorated sharply in 1959, when the Soviets started to restrict the flow of scientific and technological information to China. The dispute escalated, and the Soviets withdrew all of their personnel from China by August 1960, leaving many construction projects dormant. In the same year, the Soviets and the Chinese began to have disputes openly in international forums.

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The Great Famine (1962-66)

The policies of the Great Leap Forward departed from the approach in the Soviet-inspired First Plan, which stressed central command and extensive planning. Instead, the approach entailed local areas marshalling all available resources for large projects.

As a result, In 1960–61, attempts were made to redirect twenty million workers into agricultural production and to reallocate investment into those industrial sectors that could further support agriculture.

Overall, the Great Leap Forward which diverted millions of agricultural workers into industry, and the four pests campaign²⁶ which led to an infestation of locusts, as well as unprecedented natural and weather based issues, caused a huge decrease in food production. Simultaneously, rural officials, under huge pressure to meet their quotas, vastly overstated how much grain was available. Thus, a massive nationwide famine ensued.

In January 1958, Mao had launched the Great Leap Forward, to turn China from an agrarian nation to an industrialised one. The relatively small agricultural collectives that had been formed were merged into far larger people's communes, and many peasants were ordered to work on infrastructure projects and on the production of iron and steel. Some private food production was banned, and livestock and farm implements were brought under collective ownership.

The effect of the diversion of labour to steel production and infrastructure projects, combined with natural disasters at the time, led to an approximately 15% drop in grain production in 1959 followed by a further 10% decline in 1960 and no recovery in 1961.

To win favour with their superiors and avoid being purged, each layer in the party exaggerated the amount of grain produced under them. Based upon the falsely reported success, party cadres were ordered to requisition a high amount of that fictitious harvest.

The result, compounded in some areas by drought and in others by floods, was that farmers were left with little food and many millions starved to death in the great Chinese Famine. The people of urban areas were given food stamps each month, but the people of rural areas were expected to grow their own crops and give some of the crops back to the government. The death count in rural parts of China surpassed the deaths in the urban centres. The famine was a direct cause of the death of some 30 million Chinese peasants between 1959 and 1962. Many children became malnourished.

In late autumn 1958, Mao had himself condemned the practices used during Great Leap Forward such as forcing peasants to do labour without enough food or rest which resulted in epidemics and starvation. He also acknowledged that anti-rightist campaigns were a major cause of "production at the expense of livelihood." He refused to abandon the Great Leap Forward, but he did demand that they be confronted.

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Review

Lushan Conference(s)

The two Lushan Conferences were held between July and August 1959. The Politburo met in an "expanded session" followed by the 8th Plenum of the Central Committee. The major topic of discussion was the great Leap Forward.

²⁶ The Four Evils campaign was one of the first campaigns of the Great Leap Forward, from 1958 to 1962. Authorities targeted four "pests" for elimination: rats, flies, mosquitoes, and sparrows. The extermination of sparrows resulted in severe ecological imbalance, and was one of the causes of the Great Chinese Famine, which lasted from 1959 to 1961, with an estimated death toll due to starvation that ranges in the tens of millions (15 to 55 million). In 1960, the campaign against sparrows ended, and bed bugs became an official target.

The Lushan Conference marked the first time since the founding of the PCR in 1949 that disagreement over the direction of policy spilled into open conflict between party leaders.

Mao was critical of his own role in the failures of the Great Leap Forward. He described the backyard steel campaign he had promoted as a "great catastrophe" and criticised himself for pushing communisation so fast. In a July speech before the Lushan Conference, Mao stated, "The chaos caused was on a grand level and I take responsibility for it."

A major focus of the Lushan Conference was the distortion created by false production reports. Lower bureaucratic levels were asked to fulfil unrealistic production quotas. Ignoring the actual conditions at even lower levels, officials frequently claimed that the production goals had been achieved. These behaviours were prompted by higher-level officials who overly emphasised production. The ensuing false statistics impeded central coordination of the economy. This created broader political tension over centralisation and decentralisation.

Immediately after the Lushan Conference, Mao launched the Anti-Right Deviation Struggle in August 1959. According to Mao, the Lushan Conference disclosed the existence of a huge group of "rightists" who were vulnerable to Western influence. In total, over 3 million CCP members were purged or penalised during the campaign.

The campaign was launched by Chairman Mao, but Deng Xiaoping played an important role. The Anti-Rightist Campaign significantly turned the country into a de facto one-party state.

Seven-Thousand Cadres Conference

The Seven-Thousand Cadres Conference was one of the largest work conferences ever of the CCP. It took place in Beijing from 11 January to 7 February 1962. The conference was attended by over 7,000 party officials nationwide, focusing on the issues of the Great Leap Forward.

Chairman Mao made self-criticism during the conference, after which he took a semi-retired role, leaving future responsibilities to Chinese President Liu Shaoqi and Vice Premier Deng Xiaoping. Mao could not command sufficient support from the Central Committee to continue the radical policies of the Great Leap Forward, had he been so inclined.

The conference revealed serious divisions within the party's top leadership between those who thoroughly endorsed the Three Red Banners, and those who maintained doubts about them. The disagreement between Mao and Liu (and Deng) became more and more apparent, especially on Mao's call to "never forget the class struggle".

In August 1962, Mao emphasised that the class struggle must be talked about "every year, every month and every day. Mao also criticised the economic reforms carried out by Liu Shaoqi and others, even describing the reforms to foreign leaders as "attempts to undermine socialist collectivism and destroy socialism", in February 1964.

Mao stepped down as President of China on 27 April 1959; he retained other top positions such as Chairman of the Communist Party and of the Central Military Commission. The Presidency was transferred to Liu Shaoqi. Mao eventually abandoned the policy in 1962.

In 1963, Mao launched the nationwide Social Education, and in 1966, he launched the Cultural Revolution in order to return to the centre of power. Liu was persecuted to death as a "traitor" as well as a 'capitalist roader' and Deng was also purged (twice).

However, Liu Shaoqi and Deng Xiaoping rescued the economy by disbanding the people's communes, introducing elements of private control of peasant smallholdings and importing grain from Canada and Australia to mitigate the worst effects of famine.

Split from Soviet Union

The Sino-Soviet split was the gradual worsening of relations between the People's Republic of China and the USSR during the Cold War. This was primarily caused by doctrinal divergences that arose

from their different interpretations and practical applications of Marxism-Leninism, as influenced by their respective geo-politics during the Cold War of 1947–1991.

In 1950, Mao Zedong and Joseph Stalin (1878-1953) safeguarded their national interests with a Treaty of Friendship, Alliance and Mutual Assistance. Stalin's inputs included a loan for \$300 million; military aid should Japan attack the PRC, and the transfer of various inter-border assets..

In 1953, guided by Soviet economists, the PRC applied the USSR's model of a a planned economy which gave first priority to the development of heavy industry and second priority to the production of consumer goods. Later, ignoring the guidance of technical advisors, Mao launched the Great Leap Forward., which aggravated the Great Chinese Famine that resulted from the latter

In 1954, Nikita Khrushchev (1894-1971) repaired relations with trade agreements, a formal acknowledgement of Stalin's economic unfairness to the PRC, fifteen industrial-development projects, and exchanges of technicians (c. 10,000) and political advisors (c. 1,500), whilst Chinese labourers were sent to fill shortages of manual workers in Siberia. Despite this, Mao and Khrushchev disliked each other, both personally and ideologically. However, by 1955, 60% of the PRC's exports went to the USSR, by way of the five-year plans begun in 1953.

In 1956, Nikita Khrushchev denounced Josep Stalin and began the de-Stalinisation of the USSR. Mao and the Chinese leadership were appalled as the PRC and the USSR progressively diverged in their interpretations and applications of Leninist theory. Sino-Soviet debates about the interpretation of Marxism-Leninism became specific disputes about the Soviet Union's policies of national de-Stalinisation and international peaceful co-existence, which Mao decried as revisionism.

By 1961, their intractable ideological differences provoked the PRC's formal denunciation of Soviet communism as the work of "revisionist traitors" in the USSR. The PRC also declared the Soviet Union to be "social imperialist".

The split also concerned the leadership of world communism. The USSR had a network of Communist parties it supported; China now created its own rival network to battle it out. Maoism, the so-called "Marxism-Leninism with Chinese characteristics" was attracting the developing world which were mainly agrarian. By the 1960s, Mao was clearly talking about a variant of (Chinese) communism independently applicable to countries with similar characteristics.

The Sino-Soviet split resulted in withdrawal of Soviet technical experts and aid from the country. This included withdrawal of help from China's Project 596, to build an atom bomb – which they did on their own by 1964 and thereby entered the Cold War as a third party.

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Development Programme II – Third Front

Preliminary drafts of the original Third Five Year Plan contained no provision for developing large scale industry in China's interior. In April 1964, a General Staff report concluded that the concentration of China's industry in its major coastal cities made it vulnerable to attack by foreign powers. It prompted Mao to argued for the development of basic industry and national defence industry in protected locations in China's interior.

The Gulf of Tonkin Incident on 2 August 1964 increased Chinses fears of a potential invasion by the United States and crystallised support for Mao's industrialisation proposal, which came to be known as the Third Front. This was in fact formally approved on 12 August 1864 and launched with top priority. On that date, Zhou Enlai approved enormous industrial development in southwest China, among others Panzhihua Iron and Steel (in Sichuan), Liupanshui coal mines (in Guizhou), and the building of railroads to connect Sichuan, Yunnan, and Guizhou.

The secretive Third Front construction involved massive projects including extensive railroad infrastructure, the aerospace industry including satellite launch facilities, and the steel production industry.

Development of the Third Front slowed in 1966, but accelerated again after the Sino-Soviet border conflict in 1969 at Zhenbao Island. The Third Front construction again decreased after 1972, with improving rapprochement with the US.

When Deng Xiaoping's Reform and Opening-Up began after Mao's death, China began to gradually wind down Third Front projects. The Third Front distributed physical and human capital around the country, decreased regional disparities and created favourable conditions for later market development.

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Third Development Plan (1966-70) **Third Front (1964–1980)**

Ultimately, the Third Front called for the prioritisation of national defence in the light of a possible big war, actively preparing for conflict and speeding up development in three key areas; national defence, science and technology, and industry and transport infrastructure.

The turn towards a greater emphasis on developing heavy industries and national defence industries was prompted by fears among Chinese leadership that the United States would ultimately invade China. Support among leadership for Mao's proposed Third Front construction increased as a result and changed the direction of the Third Five Year Plan.

The campaign was motivated by concerns that China's industrial and military infrastructure would be vulnerable in the event of invasion by the Soviet Union or air raids by the United States. Its development was motivated following the escalation of the Vietnam War. The Third Front" was a geo-military concept: The region covered 13 provinces and autonomous regions with its core area in the Northwest.

It was the largest development campaign of Mao-era China, it involved massive investment in national defence, technology, basic industries (including manufacturing, mining, metal, and electricity), transportation and other infrastructure investments, and was carried out primarily in secret. Begun in 1964, the first public announcement of it was in 1978.

The Third Front campaign industrialised part of China's rugged interior and agricultural region. Between 1964 and 1980, China invested 205 billion yuan in the Third Front Region, accounting for 39.01% of total national investment in basic industries and infrastructure. Millions of factory workers, cadres, intellectuals, military personnel, and tens of millions of construction workers, flocked to or were moved to the Third Front region.

The Third Front stimulated previously poor and agricultural economies in China's southwest and northwest. More than 1,100 large and medium-sized projects were established. Dozens of cities emerged as major industrial cities.

However, the designs of many Third Front projects were uneconomic due to their location, or deficient due to their hurried construction. Many were located in remote areas that were hard to access and far away from supplies and potential markets.

After rapprochement with the United States from around 1972, investment in its projects decreased. Since the reform of state-owned enterprises starting in the 1980s, many Third Front plants went bankrupt, though some others reinvented themselves and continued to serve as pillars in their respective local economies or were developed into successful private enterprises.

Prior to the Third Front construction, the fourteen largest cities in China's potentially vulnerable regions included approximately 60% of the country's manufacturing, 50% of its chemical industries, and 52% of its national defence industries; in particular, the northeast was China's industrial centre. China's population was concentrated in eastern coastal areas where they would be vulnerable to attack by air or water.

China built 1,100 Third Front projects (encompassing 1,945 industrial enterprises and research institutions) between 1965 and 1980. Major universities, including both Tsinghua and Peking universities, opened campuses in Third Front cities.

From 1964-1974, China invested more than 40% of its industrial capacity in Third Front regions. Ultimately, construction of the Third Front cost accounting for more than a third of China's spending over the 15 year period in which the Third Front construction occurred.

In 1965, the CPC authorities signalled approval for the Third Five Year Plan, consistent with its changing focus to align with the Third Front.

Aside from material consequences, some urban and rural workers saw Third Front work favourably because it was to express their commitment to building Chinese socialism through bringing industry to undeveloped regions and building an industrial base to help protect China in the event of invasion.

Construction of the Third Front slowed during 1966 as the Cultural Revolution ignited leftist extremism. By comparison to the rest of the country, however, Third Front work was less disrupted by the Cultural Revolution, consistent with the broader pattern that central officials acted to protect national security-related work units throughout the country.

Besides newly built large projects, many Third Front plants were spinoffs or entirely moved from existing plants in other parts of the country. In a document issued in early 1965, plants in the First and Second Fronts were required to contribute their best equipment and workers to the Third Front Movement, incomplete statistics show that between 1964 and 1970, 380 large projects, 145 thousand workers and 38 thousand units of equipment, were moved from the coastal areas to the Third Front region. Approximately 400 state-owned enterprises were re-located from coastal cities to secret locations in China's interior regions.

Achievements

The primary achievement of construction during the Third Front was the building of ten new interprovincial lines. Building the Chengdu-Kunming and the Guiyang-Kunming lines linked all southwest provincial capitals using rail for the first time. The Xiangfan-Chongqing and Hunan-Guizhou connected the central and western provinces by rail for the first time.

Chinese policy-makers determined that vehicle manufacturing should be advanced, and therefore the first Automotive Works transferred a third of its workforce to develop the Second Automobile Works as part of the campaign.

In Sichuan province, China developed an integrated nuclear sector which included uranium mining and processing facilities.

Electronics manufacturing expanded during the Third Front and by 1980, inland China accounted for more than half of the country's electronics production capacity and work force. Major production facilities were built in Sichuan, Shaanxi, and Guizhou, with the most widely known electronics factory being Changlong Electric in Sichuan.

In the late 1960s and the early 1970s, nearly all work units in China's aerospace industry were established via the Third Front. These Third Front projects benefitted through the launch of China's first satellite in 1970, expansion of Jiuquan Sterlite Launch Centre, the building of the Xichang Satellite Launch Centre, and the Talyuan Satellite Launch Centre.

In August 1972, the Planning Commission recommended that the First and Second Fronts need no longer view supporting the Third Front as their "primary task"; instead it downgraded Third Front assistance to an "important task." The Planning Commission also stated concerns about the amount of Third Front funding leading to neglect of heavy industry elsewhere, as well as insufficient investment in agriculture.

After a Party Work Conference in May 1973 resolved to re-direct state investment efforts from the Third Front to the northeast and the coastal regions, the Third Front was no longer the country's most critical economic objective. Agriculture and light industry became more important priorities.

During discussions of the Third Five Year Plan, Mao acknowledged that during the Great Leap Forward, "We set revenue too high and extended the infrastructure battlefront too long," and that it was "best to do less and well".

Fourth Development Plan (1971–1975)

The primary objective of the Fourth Development Plan continued to be support for the Third Front preparations. The parallel and proportionately increasing focus was to establish China's independent and relatively complete national economic and industrial systems. The latter requirements needed separate investment, development and economic cooperation at various zones and at various levels, each with its own unique characteristics, nationally synergises and synchronised.

The Fourth Five Year Plan sought decentralisation and prioritised "small scale, indigenous, and labour intensive" development projects over "large scale, foreign, and capital intensive" development, the adjustments to a certain extent to alleviate their disparities within the national economy .

The Fourth Five-Year Plan was officially terminated in January 1975. The final results of the implementation at this time were as follows: the total industrial and agricultural output value completed 101.7% of the plan, with 104.5% of the plan completed in agriculture and 100.6% in industry.

I could not determine what part of the net productive output was due to (a) the post Great Forward Leap corrections (particularly in agriculture and local industry) of Hua-Deng, the initial outputs of the Third Front and (c) the new socialist market economic sectors. The following main products were reported as completed of targets: grain (103.5%), cotton (96.5%), steel (79.7%), raw coal (109.5%), crude oil (110.1%), power generation (103.1%), cotton fibres (96.8%), and railroad freight (98.7%).

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Cultural Revolution

The Cultural Revolution, formally known as the Great Proletarian Cultural Revolution, was a socio—political movement lasted until 1976. It can be divided into two main periods:

- . (a) spring 1966 to summer 1968 (when most of the key events took place), and
- . (b) a tailing period that lasted until fall 1976

One might think of it as an internal upheaval or revolution. Its stated goal was to preserve Chinese socialisation by purging remnants of capitalism and traditional elements from Chinese society.

The Cultural Revolution and the Third Front took place over the same period. I have not quite been able to sort out how the nation handled and moved the masses (millions) of people involved in both operations, quite apart from the youth to the mountains programme. One might say only a centrally planned socialist economy could have done. It.

The Great Leap's Forward failed and could have ended Mao Zedong's influence. Instead of moving forward into a more modern country, Mao and the CCP took a step back into the past. Harsh weather and gross economic mismanagement resulted in the worst famine in history. Mao's position with the party was weakened, so he worked on a plan that would be his defining moment and would give the Chinese a national identity. From here, he plotted his return to the pinnacle of power, which resulted in the Cultural Revolution.

Mao saw this as a prime opportunity to sow chaos and push the country towards the downfall of the old system, leaving a blank slate from which a reconstruction based on complete Communism would emerge. Thus, the central government at first did little or nothing to stop or discourage the Red Guards' acts, no matter how abusive they were.

The early phase of the Cultural Revolution was characterised by mass movements and political “pluralisation”(chaos). Virtually anyone could create a political organisation, even without party approval. Known as the Red Guards, these organisations arose in schools and universities and later in factories and other institutions. After 1968, most of these organisations ceased to exist, although their legacies had to be dealt with.

Red Guards

Mao said that the bourgeois elements had infiltrated the government and society with the aim of restoring capitalism. Mao called on young people to “bombard the headquarters”, and proclaimed that “to rebel is justified”.

The Cultural Revolution started with Mao reaching out to high school students for ideological and material support. They were asked to target teachers viewed as possessing or propagating capitalist views and rebelling against them, which many were open to due to high academic pressure.

Mass upheaval began in Beijing with the Red August in 1966. Many young people, mainly students, responded by forming cadres of Red Guards throughout the country, flaunting Mao cult quotations. During that time, the Red Guards participated in parades, mass meetings, and propagation.

Emboldened radicals began seizing power from local governments and party branches, establishing new revolutionary committees in their place, while smashing public property. These committees often split into rival factions.

The Cultural Revolution consisted of many different smaller sub-campaigns that affected all of China, some of which came about quite quickly.

One of these campaigns was the Monsters and Demons campaign that ran from 1966 to 1967. The campaign’s name referred to metaphors that were used to demonise one’s political opponents. Once someone was labeled as a “cow demon”, they were to become imprisoned in a cowshed, storehouse or dark room. The country ended up in complete chaos once the Red Guards entered the picture.

From 1966 to 1968, all schools in China were closed, and college entrance examinations cancelled. Secondary and primary school students had the option to still go if they wished, which many did because they were curious as to what was going on. Schools were used as a rallying ground to interrogate those who were considered to be class enemies, such as teachers.

Massacre in Beijing

On August 18, 1966, Mao Zedong met with a leader of the Red Guards atop Tiananmen Gate. After this meeting, the morale of the Red Guards was significantly boosted, triggering their massive slaughter in Beijing. In particular, on August 25, 1966, thousands of Red Guards started a week-long massacre in Langan Market.

At the same time, Red Guards launched a nationwide campaign to destroy the “Four Olds”. In Beijing alone, a total of 4,922 historic sites were ruined, and the Red Guards burned 2.3 million books as well as 3.3 million paintings, art objects, and pieces of furniture.

On August 22, 1966, Mao approved an official document ordering “do not use police force—no exception—to intervene or suppress the movement of revolutionary students”.

On the following day, Mao gave a talk, publicly supporting the student movement and opposing any intervention to the “Cultural Revolution of students”:

On August 26, a minister claimed that it was *not* incorrect for the Red Guards to beat “bad people” and it was fine if the “bad people” were killed. On the next day, the Daxing District Massacres in Beijing broke out.

Nevertheless, millions of Red Guards continued to arrive in Beijing to see Mao Zedong at Tiananmen Square on several occasions, including September 15, October 1 and so on.

According to official statistics published in November 1985, the death toll during Red August was 10,275, while 92,000 homes were ransacked and 125,000 families were forced to leave Beijing.

The revolution was an urban movement. It fought what was seen as the excess successes of a growing population of urban workers, students, and intellectuals, who were seen as the prosperous bourgeoisie.

Red August of Beijing instigated the movement in multiple cities including Shanghai, Guangzhou, Nanjing, and Xiamen. where local political leaders, intellectuals, teachers and members of the "five black categories"²⁷ were persecuted and even killed by the Red Guards.

Once Mao's cabinet tried to rein them in, most Red Guard squads refused to stop their activities, believing their fight not to be complete yet (or being unwilling to lose the privileges they held in the name of class struggle). Mao drastically changed his views about them and set up to break their power base by splitting them up.

Up to the Mountains and Down to the Countryside Movement,

The Down to the Countryside Movement was a policy actually instituted between the mid-1950s and 1978. Mao's policy differed from the early 1960s sending-down policy in its political context. President Liu Shaoqi instituted the first sending-down policy to redistribute excess urban population following the Great Famine and the Great Leap Forward. Mao's stated aim for the policy was to ensure that urban students could "develop their talents to the full" through education amongst the rural population

As a result of what he perceived to be pro-bourgeoisie thinking prevalent among the young, Mao declared certain privileged urban youth would be sent to mountainous areas or farming villages to learn from the workers and farmers there.

In total, approximately 17 million youth were sent to rural areas as a result of the movement. Usually only the oldest child had to go, but younger siblings could volunteer to go instead.

(I could not determine the exact numbers and aerial distribution of the pre- and post-Cultural Revolution groups, or the connections among the latter of the closing of the schools and the universities and the mass export of the youth, where the Red guards fitted in, and how the youths got mobilised. I imagine they were kept way from the Third Front workforce, perhaps not.)

Many fresh high school graduates, who became known as the so-called "sent-down youths" were forced out of the cities and effectively exiled to remote areas of China. Some commentators consider these people, many of whom lost the opportunity to attend university, China's "lost generation". General Secretary Xi Jinping was also among the youth sent to rural areas. Xi was a send-down youth for seven years until he enrolled in Tsinghua university chemical engineer programme in 1975.

In 1978, the government ended the movement, but the sent-down youth were not allowed to return to their homes in urban areas. After a huge wave of protest across the country, the send-down youth were allowed to return to urban areas in early 1979. Resettlement in the countryside was a more permanent form.

From December 1968 onward, millions of educated urban youth consisting of secondary school graduates and students, were mobilised and sent "up to the mountains and down to the villages" i.e. to rural villages and to frontier settlements. In these areas, they had to build up and take root, to receive reeducation from the poor and lower-middle peasants". Ten percent of the 1970 urban population was relocated.

The population grew from 500 million to 700 million people in China. One way for Mao to handle the population growth was to send people to the countryside. Mao was from the countryside and wanted all educated youth to have experience there. This was a way for high school students to better integrate themselves into the working class.

²⁷ The "Five Black Categories" were classifications of political identity and social status which included landlords, rich farmers, counter revolutionaries, bad influencers, and rightists.

"In the beginning, the Cultural Revolution exhilarated me because suddenly I felt that I was allowed to think with my own head and say what was on my mind". While many believed that this was a great opportunity to transform themselves into a strong socialist youth, many students could not deal with the harsh life and died in the process of reeducation

End of Cultural Revolution

In 1969, Mao declared the Cultural Revolution to be over. Various historians however marked the end of the Cultural Revolution to be in 1976, following Mao's death and the arrest of the Gang of Four.

The Central Committee in 1981 officially declared the Cultural Revolution a "severe setback" for the PRC. An estimate of around 400,000 deaths is a widely accepted minimum figure of deaths. In rural China alone some 36 million people were persecuted, of whom between 750,000 and 1.5 million were killed, with roughly the same number permanently injured.

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Death of Mao Zedong

Mao suffered from multiple lung and heart ailments during his later years, possibly Parkinson's disease. He suffered two major heart attacks, one in March and another in late June, then a third on 2 September, rendering him an invalid. He died nearly one week later, on 9 September 1976, at the age of 82.

On 18 September, guns, sirens, whistles and horns across China were simultaneously blown and a mandatory three-minute silence was observed. Tiananmen Square was packed with millions of people and a military band played "The Internationale". Hua Guofeng concluded the service with a 20-minute-long eulogy. Despite Mao's request to be cremated, his body was later permanently put on display in the Mausoleum of Mao Zedong.

Legacy

On 27 June 1981, the communist party's Central Committee adopted a Resolution which assessed the legacy of the Mao era. It describes the setbacks during the period 1957 to 1964 (although it generally affirms this period) and major mistakes beginning in 1965, attributing Mao's errors to individualist tendencies which arose when he departed from the collective view of the leadership. Regarding Mao's legacy, the Resolution concludes Mao's contributions to the Chinese Revolution far outweigh his mistakes.

He has also been described as a political intellect, theorist, military strategist, poet, and visionary. He was credited and praised for driving imperialism out of China, having unified China and for ending the previous decades of civil war. He has also been credited with having improved the status of women in China, and for improving literacy and education.

In December 2013, a poll from the state-run Global Times indicated that roughly 85% of the 1,045 respondents surveyed felt that Mao's achievements outweighed his mistakes. It has been said in China that Mao was 70 percent right and 30 percent wrong.

His policies resulted in the deaths of tens of millions of people in China during his reign, done through starvation, persecution, prison labour and mass execution. Mao rarely gave direct instruction for peoples' physical elimination. The overwhelming majority of those killed by Mao's policies were unintended casualties of famine, while the other three or four million were necessary victims in the struggle to transform China.

Mao's China has been described as an autocratic and totalitarian regime responsible for mass repression. Mao was one of the great tyrants of the twentieth century. His political ideology continues to be embraced by many Communist organisations around the world.

In China

China's population grew from around 550 million to over 900 million under his rule. Mao is credited for raising the average life expectancy from 35 in 1949 to 63 by 1975, bringing "unity and stability to a country that had been plagued by civil wars and foreign invasions", and laying the foundation for China to "become the equal of the great global powers".

He is lauded for carrying out massive land reforms, opening up the country, and thrusting the Third Front industrialisation programme forward, which has since catapulted China into the competitive front line among the big powers.

Liao Chenyun (Chen Yun), post-Mao co-leader with Deng Xiaoping remarked "Had Mao died in 1956, his achievements would have been immortal. Had he died in 1966, he would still have been a great man but flawed. But he died in 1976. Alas, what can one say?" and Deng Xiaoping himself paid this tribute: "I should remind you that Chairman Mao dedicated most of his life to China, that he saved the party and the revolution in their most critical moments, that, in short, his contribution was so great that, without him, the Chinese people would have had a much harder time finding the right path out of the darkness. We also shouldn't forget that it was Chairman Mao who combined the teachings of Marx and Lenin with the realities of Chinese history—that it was he who applied those principles, creatively, not only to politics but to philosophy, art, literature, and military strategy."

Another commentator makes this remark: Mao was both "a successful creator and ultimately an evil destroyer" but also argued that he was a complicated figure who should not be lionised as a saint or reduced to a demon, as he "indeed tried his best to bring about prosperity and gain international respect for his country."

Yet another commentator remarked; "The simple facts of Mao's career seem incredible: in a vast land of 400 million people, at age 28, with a dozen others, to found a party and in the next fifty years to win power, organize, and remould the people and reshape the land—history records no greater achievement. no predecessor can equal Mao Tse-tung's scope of accomplishment, for no other country was ever so ancient and so big as China.

Yet another historian has had this to say: "It is the blots on the Maoist record, especially the Great Leap and the Cultural Revolution, that are now most deeply imprinted on our political and historical consciousness. But future historians, without ignoring the failures and the crimes, will surely record the Maoist era in the history of the People's Republic (however else they may judge it) as one of the great modernising epochs in world history, and one that brought great social and human benefits to the Chinese people."

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The Transition

Zhou Enlai

Zhou Enlai (1898-1976 CE) was a Chinese statesman, diplomat, and revolutionary who served as the inaugural Premier of the People's Republic of China (PRC) from 1949 until his death in 1976, and concurrently as the inaugural Minister of Foreign Affairs from 1949 to 1958. Zhou was a key figure in the CCP and ally of Mao Zedong during the Chinese Civil War, later helping consolidate its control, form its foreign policy and develop the economy.

He was involved in the 1919 May Fourth Movement, and in the early 1920s studied in France, where he joined the newly-founded CCP.

During the party's alliance with the KM, he worked in the political department of the Whampoa Military Academy. In 1927, Zhou led the worker uprising which led to the Shanghai Massacre, after which he helped lead the Nanchang Uprising, then was transferred to the Jiangxi Socket and did the Long March. Zhou came to support Mao Zedong, who became leader of the CCP in 1935.

During the Xi'an Incident in 1936, Zhou successfully persuaded KMT leader ,Chiang Kai-shek,to agree to form a Second Front, against the Japanese. During the Second Sino-Japanese War, Zhou was the resident representative of the CCP in Chongqing and during the renewed civil war from 1946 assisted Mao in commanding military campaigns.

After the establishment of the PRC in 1949, Zhou was appointed head of government and foreign minister. He helped devise policies advocating peaceful co-existence. Zhou survived the purges of other top officials during the Cultural Revolution from 1966 to 1976, and was one of the main driving forces behind affairs of state as Mao dedicated much of his later years to political struggle and ideological work.

Zhou's attempts at mitigating the Red Guards damage and his efforts to protect others from their wrath made him immensely popular in its later stages. Zhou was designated as Mao's successor in 1973, but struggled internally against the Gang of Four. In that year, he brought back Deng to the Party as vice Premier.

In 1975, he fell out of the public eye for medical treatment and died one year later. The outpouring of public grief, which his death provoked in Beijing, turned to anger at the Gang of Four, leading to a major 1976 Tiananmen outpouring.

Hua Guofeng

Zhou was succeeded by Hua Guofeng (1921-2008 CE) as premier. Hua was a loyal Mao revolutionary supporter and a trusted friend of the latter. He was the designated successor after Mao's death. Hua Guofeng would serve in due course as Chairman of the CPC and the 2nd Premier of China.

Hua held the top offices of the government, party, and the military after the deaths of Mao (and Premier Zhou Enlai) and sought to pursue the Maoist ideology, making corrections for the Cultural Revolution. In particular he seized power from the Gang of Four.

But, he was gradually forced out of supreme power by a coalition of party leaders, including Deng Xiaoping, between December 1978 and June 1981, and subsequently retreated from the political limelight, though still remaining a member of the central until 2002.

Hua joined the CCP in 1938, seeing action as a guerrilla fighter. Hua rose to become Hunan's party secretary during the Cultural Revolution, and was elevated to the national stage in the early 1970s. In 1973, Mao named Hua Minister of Public Security and Vice Premier, thus giving him control of police and security forces.

Hua's influence increased with the Cultural Revolution as he supported it and led the movement in Hunan. He organised the preparation for the establishment of the local Revolutionary Committee in 1967, of which he was a deputy chairman.

He was elected a full member of the 9th Central Committee in 1969. In December 1970, he was elected Chairman of the Revolutionary Committee as well as First Secretary of the CCP Hunan Committee.

After the death of Zhou Enlai, in January 1976, Mao elevated Hua to the positions of premier and first vice chairman of the CCP which made him Mao's designated successor.

Hua also succeeded Mao as party chairman and chairman of the Central Military Commission becoming the first to simultaneously hold the offices of party leader, premier, and commander-in-chief

Hua reversed some of the Cultural Revolution era policies, such as the constant ideological campaigns, but he was generally devoted to a command economy and the continuation of the Maoist line.

However, in October 1976, a month after Mao's death, Hua arrested and removed the Gang of Four from power with the assistance of Mao's security chief who became one of Hua's key supporters.

In the wake of growing sentiments for reformism, In June 1981, a group of party veterans led by Deng Xiaoping forced Hua from his position of paramount leader, but allowed him to retain some titles. Hua gradually faded into political obscurity, but continued to insist on the correctness of Maoist principles.

Enter Deng Xiaoping

Mao Zedong was born on 26 December 1893 (in Hunan) and Deng Xiaoping on 22 August 1904 (in Sichuan)) not quite a decade apart. Both would start as KMT revolutionaries, join the CPC, live the Jiangxi Soviet, march the Long March, fight the Sino-Japanese War and found the People's Republic of China on 1 Oct 1949 at Tiananmen Square.

No two men could have had a more different impact on their country. Mao chose collectivisation to release the untapped productive resources of the land, leading to the disasters of the Great Leap Forward and the Great Chinese Famine. If he had a weakness, Mao tied himself to ideology – in fact to evolving a doctrinal variant suitable for revolution “with “Chinese characteristics” - and other Third World economies. Deng on the other hand saw the better prospects in a command-based market economy – superior in fact to a purely capitalist economy. It is possible he may have introduced the mixed command economies of the future.

He served as a political commissar in the Red Army during the Long March and the Sino-Japanese War, and later helped to lead the PLA to victory in the civil war.

After the proclamation of the PRC in 1949, Deng held several key regional roles, eventually rising to vice premier and CPC Secretary General of the Party in the 1950s.

He presided over whatever repair and reconstruction efforts he could make. In particular, he played a significant corrective role in the Anti-Rightist Campaign of 1957. During the spring of 1978, 130,000 victims of the campaign who had been removed from their positions in 1957, recovered their social statuses, many of them senior party officials who rallied round him in his Programmes.

During the Cultural Revolution from 1966, Deng was condemned as the party's "number two capitalist roader" after Liu Shaoqi and was purged twice by Mao.

Zhou Enlai died in January 1976, and his death eroded Deng's remaining support within the Party's Central Committee. After Deng delivered Zhou's official eulogy at the state funeral, Mao's hardcore Gang of Four, began the "Counterattack of the Right-Deviationist Reversal-of-Verdicts Trend" campaign. Hua Guofeng, not Deng, was selected to become Zhou's successor as Premier on 4 February 1976.

On 2 February 1976, the Central Committee issued a Top-Priority Directive, officially transferring Deng to work on "external affairs" and thus removing him from the party's power apparatus.

After a mass public mourning of Zhou which culminated in the Tiananmen Incident on 5 April 1976, the Gang of Four deemed Deng was the mastermind behind the incident, and Mao himself wrote that "the nature of things has changed". Deng was removed from all party roles and moved to a house east to Tiananmen Square.

Following Mao's death on 9 September 1976, Hua gradually emerged as the *de facto* leader of China. Looking to rid the Party of extremists and successfully marginalise the Gang of Four, on 2 July 1977, Deng was restored to the posts of Vice-chairman of the Central Committee, Vice-chairman of the Military Commission and Chief of the General Staff of the People's Liberation Army.

Deng Xiaoping also resumed his positions as Prime Minister of the State Council and Vice-Chairman of the CCP. After Deng came back to work, he started to fix some political decisions of Mao's era.

Deng continued to challenge Hua's legitimacy and fight for the domination in the ideological field. Typical of the contest between the two, on 7 February 1977. Hua caused to be published his famous statement, “the “Two Whatevers”, averring that “We will resolutely uphold whatever policy decisions Chairman Mao made, and unswervingly follow whatever instructions Chairman Mao gave”. In

response, Deng wrote an essay on May 24, 1977 titled "The 'Two Whatever' Policy Does Not Accord With Marxism".

A party journal further published an article "Pragmatism is the Only Standard in Measuring Truth" in May 1978. This article was re-published and soon caused a huge discussion movement in China, which was called "The Discussion on Criteria of Truth".

Throughout 1977–78, Deng centred his policy efforts around economic recovery. Schools began to reopen, and the more extreme aspects of Mao's personality cult were toned down. It was now being said that he was a great leader and thinker, but not an infallible god and that the revolution had been the work of many people and not just him.

As Vice-Premier in charge of Technology and Education, Deng restored the University Entrance Examinations in 1977, opening the doors to nearly a generation of youth who lacked this opportunity because of the Cultural Revolution, with 680,000 passing the first entrance exams. He elevated the social status of intellectuals from the lows of the Cultural Revolution to becoming an "integral part of socialist construction."

Deng chaired the 11th National Congress, China's *de jure* legislative body, and stressed the importance of the Four Modernisations, a series of advances in various fields aimed at strengthening the country by adapting to modern standards.

On December 13, 1978, Deng delivered a speech at the closing ceremony of the 3rd Plenary of the 11th Plenary of the 11th CCP Central Committee, during which he replaced Hua Guofeng as the new paramount leader of China. The latter term was not a party, state or constitutional appointment. It became the recognised title of the man who led the nation.

It has to be remembered that at that point, China was still shaking itself off the woes of the Great Chinese Famine, still entrapped in the central planning and collectivism of the Great Forward Leap, while compelled to restructure nationally to create the Third Front for national defence and security against both the Soviet Union and the Western world.

On 1 January 1979, the United States recognized the People's Republic of China, leaving the (Taiwan) Republic of China's nationalist government to one side, and business contacts between China and the West began to grow.

In 1979, Deng stated, "Socialism cannot endure if it remains poor. If we want to uphold Marxism and socialism in the international class struggle, we have to demonstrate that the Marxist system of thought is superior to all others, and that the socialist system is superior to capitalism".

Despite the freshness of Deng's ideas, in truth they were not really new, but merely an effort to restore China to the situation of the mid-1960s, right before the Cultural Revolution.

Deng made one important change. The Politburo continued to be a gerontocracy, for the average age of the Central Committee was still around 70. He introduced term appointments. Deng Xiaoping proposed mandatory retirement ages despite some protests from party elders and also guidelines were put in place that CCP members who lost their posts or were removed from office could not be jailed or subjected to physical harm. To that end, CCP figures such as Hua Guofeng were merely demoted to unimportant posts, but otherwise retained their party membership and state pension.

Liu Shaoqi

Mention should be made here of Liu Shaoqi (1898 -1969 CE), who in 1949 became a vice chairman of the CPC. After the establishment of the National People's Congress in 1954, Liu was elected as the chairman of its Standing Committee. In 1959, he succeeded Mao Zedong as the chairman of the People's Republic of China. Liu exercised a temperate and balanced overview which earned the respect of the moderate leadership.

During his chairmanship, he implemented policies of economic reconstruction in China, especially after the Seven Thousand Cadres Conference in 1962. Liu was publicly named as Mao's chosen successor in 1961.

However, he was criticised and then purged by Mao soon after the beginning of the Cultural Revolution in 1966, eventually being placed under house arrest in 1967. He was forced out of public life and was labelled the "commander of China's bourgeoisie headquarters", China's foremost "capitalist roader" and a traitor to the revolution. He died in prison in 1969.

Liu Shaoqi was purged twice by Mao. Liu was subsequently posthumously "re-habilitated" by Deng Xiaoping in 1980, as part of the Boluan Fanzheng programme.. ie "Eliminating chaos and returning to normal" or "Setting Things Right" refers to a period of significant socio-political reforms starting with the accession of Deng Xiaoping.

Tiananmen (Zhou Enlai) Protests, Apr 1976

Zhou Enlai died on 8 January 1976, at a time when Deng Xiaoping's reformist alliance was not yet strong enough to stand up to both the ailing Mao Zedong and his Cultural Revolution allies, the Gang of Four. A week after reading the late premier's eulogy, Deng left Beijing along with several close allies for the relative safety of Guangzhou.

Mao would soon die on 9 September 1976. Hua knew he was on a collision course with the Gang of Four, the revolutionary arm of the movement.

At the same time, the Gang of Four began denouncing Deng once again. He had been purged earlier during the Cultural Revolution.

Premier Zhou Enlai who had accepted the Cultural Revolution, but never fully supported it, regained his authority, and used it to bring Deng Xiaoping back into the Party leadership at the 10th Party Congress in 1973. Liu Shaoqi had meanwhile died in prison in 1969.

The event the Gang chose to focus on was the public expression of sorrow for the death of Zhou Enlai which took place on 4 Apr 1976 at Tiananmen Square. Popular affection for Zhou was underestimated, however, leading to a major Tiananmen Incident, a confrontation between the radicals' militia allies and Beijing citizens seeking to honour Zhou.

At the same time, Hua delivered speeches on the "official line for criticising Deng Xiaoping", which were approved by Mao and the Party Central Committee.

In the aftermath, Deng Xiaoping was blamed for inciting the Tiananmen protests and was (again) stripped of all his party and government posts, though his party membership was retained at Mao's behest.

This time, Deng would be "rehabilitated" and exonerated by Hua .With the return of Deng Xiaoping's arrival at the 121th National Congress, Hua's gradually loss authority prior to passing over the paramount leadership of the country to him in August 1978

Gang of Four

It is not surprising that that in those violent times there would be an inner circle of adherents of Mao dedicated to stoking the Cultural Revolution above other activities.

The Gang of Four was such a faction, composed of four CCP officials.. The gang's leading figure was Jiang Quin (Mao's last wife). The other members were Zhang Chungiano, Yew Wengyuan and Wang Hongwen

With a languishing Mao, the Gang of Four controlled the power organs of the CCP through the later stages of the Cultural Revolution, although it remains unclear which major decisions were made by Mao Zedong and carried out by the Gang, and which were the result of the Gang of Four's own planning.

They were later charged with a series of treasonous crimes due to their responsibility for the excesses and failures in the Cultural Revolution. Two other men who were already dead in 1976 were named as having been part of the "Gang". Mao's nephew was also considered as one of the Gang's closer associates. Most observers consider that the actual leadership of the Cultural Revolution consisted of a wider group, the Central Cultural Revolutionary Group.

Mao had placed his wife Jiang Qing, a former film actress, who before 1966 had not taken a public political role, in charge of the country's cultural apparatus. Zhang, Yao and Wang were party leaders in Shanghai who had played leading roles in securing that city for Mao during the Cultural Revolution. The removal of this group from power is sometimes considered to have marked the end of the Cultural Revolution.

Their fall did not amount to a rejection of the Cultural Revolution as such; it was organised by the new leaders, who had risen during that period.

Zhou Enlai died on 8 January 1976, and, in the subsequent months, a power struggle followed in the top echelons of the party. The reformist Deng was named acting premier, while the Gang of Four began using their newspapers to criticise Deng and to mobilise their urban militia groups. Much of the military and party security remained under the control of the party elders of the Central Committee, who generally took a cautious role in mediating between the reformist Deng and the radical Gang of Four. They agreed to the removal of Deng from office after the April Tiananmen but took steps to ensure that Deng and his allies would not be personally harmed in the process.

On September 9 1976, Chairman Mao died. For the next few weeks the Gang of Four retained control over the government media, and many articles appeared on the theme of "principles laid down" (or "established") by Mao near the end of his life. (The words "principles laid down" were themselves supposedly a quotation from Mao, but their canonical status was in dispute. Urban militia units commanded by supporters of the radical group were placed on a heightened state of readiness.

Hua Guofeng attacked the radicals' media line at a Politburo meeting in late September but Jiang Qing emphatically disagreed with Hua, and she insisted that she be named as the new party chairman. On October 4 the radical group warned, via an article that any revisionist who interfered with the established principles would "come to no good end"

The radicals hoped that the key military leaders would support them, but instead, Hua won the Army over to his side. On 6 October 1976, Hua had the four leading radicals and a number of their lesser associates all over China arrested. At an emergency Politburo meeting the next day, Hua Guofeng was appointed as the Chairman of the CCP and of the Central Military Commission (CMC), the governing body of People's Liberation Army (PLA). The PLA had been critical to Hua's appointment.

After Mao's death, In September 1976, China was left with no central authority figure, either symbolically or administratively. The Gang of Four was purged, but the new Chairman Hua insisted on continuing Maoist policies.

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Deng Xiaoping

What is Deng Xiaoping Thought?

Towards A Socialist Market Economy

Deng Xiaoping Theory is the series of his political and economic principles, that did not reject Marxist-Leninism or Maoism, but instead claim to be an adaptation of them to the existing socio-economic conditions of China.

The theory played an important role in creation of China's modern economy. Deng stressed opening China to the outside world, the implementation of "one country two systems and through the phrase "seek truth from the facts", an advocacy of political and economic pragmatism.

Deng's theory encouraged the construction of socialism within China by having it evolve according to "Chinese characteristics", guided by self-improvement. His theory did not suggest improvement or development of China's closed economic system, but rather, overthrowing the existing economic system for a more open one.

In 1979, Deng stated, "Socialism cannot endure if it remains poor. If we want to uphold Marxism and socialism in the international class struggle, we have to demonstrate that the Marxist system of thought is superior to all others, and that the socialist system is superior to capitalism".

China largely owes its economic growth to Deng Xiaoping's emphasis on economic production, under the theory of the productive force - a subset of Marxist theory²⁸. Deng believed that "only by constantly developing the productive forces can a country gradually become strong and prosperous, with a rising standard of living."

In the view of Deng, the task faced by the leadership of China was twofold: (i) promoting modernisation of the Chinese economy, and (ii) preserving the ideological unity of the Chinese Communist Party (CCP) and its control of the difficult reforms required by modernisation.

Modernisation

Deng argued that due to the past isolation of China in the international order and an extremely underdeveloped economy, in order for China to achieve socialism and to bridge the gap between China and Western capitalism, China would have to borrow certain market elements and aspects of capitalism into its economy. However, their usage would have to be state-controlled. These borrowed principles, in Deng's mind, allowed a more liberal interpretation of China's modernisation into a socialist state. This includes marketing characteristics such as planning, production, and distribution that could be interpreted as socialism.

Deng believed that public ownership of land, banks, raw materials, and strategic central industries is necessary so that a democratically elected government can allocate them for the benefit of the country as a whole; but at the same time, private ownership is allowed and encouraged in industries of finished goods and services. According to the Dengist theory, private owners in those industries are not 'bourgeoisie' because in accordance with Marxist theory bourgeoisie owns land and raw materials. In Dengist theory, private company owners are called civil run enterprises.

To preserve ideological unity, Deng Xiaoping Theory formulated the "Four Principles"

- .(1) the basic spirit of communism (socialism)
- .(2) dictatorship of the proletariat
- .(3) leadership of the Communist Party, and;
- .(4) Marxism-Leninism and Mao Zedong Thought.

Socialist Market Economy

In 1992, fourteen years after Deng had become China's leader, on a tour of southern China During Socialist Market Economy uttered his famous phrase: "Open up, Open up". This would be the foundation for China's economic development up until the present day.

²⁸ The **theory of the productive forces**, sometimes referred to as **productive force determinism**, is a variation of historical materialism and Marxism that places primary emphasis on technical advances as the basis for advances and changes in the social structure and culture of a given civilisation.

Deng Xiaoping Theory downplays the Maoist focus on class struggle on the basis that that struggle would become an obstacle to China's economic development.

The Deng Xiaoping theory played a crucial role in transforming China from its previously state-owned command economy into a socialist market economy, which resulted in a rapid increase in economic growth within the country, known as the "Chinese economic miracle".

It has increased the Chinese GDP growth rate to over 8% per year for thirty years and China now has the second largest economy by nominal GDP in the world. Due to the influence of Dengism, Vietnam and Laos have also adopted similar beliefs and policies, allowing Laos to increase its real GDP growth rate to 8.3%. Cuba is also starting to embrace such ideas.

Originating in economic reforms initiated in 1978 that integrated China into global market economy, the socialist market economy represented a "preliminary stage of developing socialism. Some commentators describe the system as a form of "state capitalism", in line with the "New Economic Policy" of the Soviet Union, adapted to the cohabitation with a globalised capitalist system.

The adoption of market reforms was seen to be consistent with China's level of development and a necessary step in advancing the productive forces of society. This aligned Chinese policy with a more traditional Marxist perspective where a fully developed socialist planned economy can only come into existence after a market economy has exhausted its historical role and gradually transformed itself into a planned economy, nudged by technological advances that make economic planning possible and therefore market relations less necessary.

In Deng's view, both state planning and market mechanisms were tools to liberate productivity, and that while a capitalist market economy is dominated by individualism, a socialist market economy would lead to common prosperity.

The socialist market economy is presented by the CCP as an early stage in the development of socialism (this stage is variously called the "primary" or "preliminary" stage of socialism), where public ownership coexists alongside a diverse range of non-public forms of ownership.

In the CCP's view, China is not a capitalist country because despite the co-existence of private capitalists and entrepreneurs with public and collective enterprise, the party retains control over the direction of the country. The state acts as a residual claimant on the profits generated by state-owned enterprises that are operated independent of government management.

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Reform And Open Up

Four Modernisations

Modernisation efforts were generalised by the concept of the Four Modernisations, to improve agriculture, industry, national defence, and science and technology in China.

The Four Modernisations were goals formally first announced by China's First Premier Zhou Enlai in January 1963. They focused China's overall vision to strengthen the nation in the fields of agriculture, industry, defence, and science and technology.

The goals of Deng's Four Modernisations aimed at expanding rural income and incentives, encouraging experiments in enterprise autonomy, reducing central planning, and establishing direct foreign investment in mainland China.

Deng adopted the Four Modernisations as a means of rejuvenating China's economy in 1977, and later they were among the defining features of Deng tenure. In December 1978 Deng announced the official launch of the Four Modernizations, formally marking the beginning of the reforms.

One core tenet was the rejection of the previously long-held concept known as the "iron rice bowl". The new idea was that all workers should not be paid the same, but rather, paid according to their

productivity. The thinking was that in order to be a consumer society, China would need to be a producing society. This was probably the most profound cultural change China made.

Four Cardinal Principles

Early in Reform and Opening Up, in March 1979, Deng stated his Four Cardinal Principles and in 1982 incorporated them in the CPC Constitution. They clearly anchor the new China with her history of socialism and communism.. The principles include:

- . 1.The principle of upholding the socialist path;
- . 2 The principle of upholding the people's democratic (proletariat) dictatorship
- . 3 The principle of upholding the leadership of the Chinese Communist Party (CPC); and
- . 4 The principle of upholding of Marxism-Leninism and Mao Zedong Thought

No debate was allowed on the Four Cardinal Principles. They were proclaimed as a sign of adherence to the communist ideology, preserving the ideological stability and legitimacy of the CCP in the growing liberalisation of the times.

The principles also marked a relaxation of control over ideology. In stating the four cardinal principles, an implication was that while the four topics could not be questioned, political ideas other than those in the list could be debated. Moreover, the interpretations of those principles were.

The Principles of Economic Reform

The Chinese economic miracle, also known as the Reform and Opening-Up, refers to a variety of reforms associated with two other cardinal terms embedded in Dengism:

- . 1 Socialism with Chinese characteristics; and
- . 2 Socialist market economy.

Deng's theory encouraged the construction of socialism within China. His theory did not suggest improvement or development of China's closed economic system, but rather, **overthrowing** the existing economic system for a more open one.

Deng criticised those he deemed as the ideologues of the Cultural Revolution for seeking "poor socialism" and "poor communism" and believing that communism was a "spiritual thing". In 1979, Deng stated, "Socialism cannot endure if it remains poor. If we want to uphold Marxism and socialism in the international class struggle, we have to demonstrate that the Marxist system of thought is superior to all others, and that the socialist system is superior to capitalism".

China largely owes its economic growth to Deng Xiaoping's emphasis on economic production, under the productive forces – a subset of 20th century Marxist theory. . He believed that "only by constantly developing the productive forces can a country gradually become strong and prosperous, with a rising standard of living".

Constitutional Reforms

In December 1982, the 12th Party Congress adopted a new constitution in place of the 1978 constitution, the fourth Constitution of the People's Republic. Most of its content are still effective as of today.

Primarily, the President was conceived of as a figurehead, with actual power resting in the hands of the Premier of the PRC and the General Secretary, meant to be two separate people.

The constitution emphasised foreign assistance in modernising and developing the country, thus rejecting the Maoist self-reliance of the 1975 and 1978 constitutions.

The last remaining references to the Cultural Revolution were also removed. Instead, the 1982 constitution stated that the "exploiter" class had been eliminated in China and so class struggle was no longer a relevant issue.

Deng emphasized that socialism did not mean shared poverty (thus repudiating the Gang of Four's slogan "We would rather be poor under socialism than rich under capitalism.")

Economic Reforms

Contrary to popular misconceptions, Deng's reforms included introduction of planned, centralised management of the macro-economy by technically proficient bureaucrats, abandoning Mao's mass campaign style of economic construction. However, unlike the Soviet model or China under Mao, this management was indirect, through market mechanisms, and much of it was modelled after economic planning and control mechanisms in Western nations.

This trend did not impede the general move toward the market at the micro-economic level. Deng sustained Mao's legacy to the extent that he stressed the primacy of agricultural output and encouraged a significant decentralisation of decision-making in the rural economy teams and individual peasant households.

At the local level, material incentives rather than political appeals were to be used to motivate the labour force, including allowing peasants to earn extra income by selling the produce of their private plots on the free market.

In the main move toward market allocation, local municipalities and provinces were allowed to invest in industries that they considered most profitable, which encouraged investment in light manufacturing. Thus, Deng's reforms shifted China's development strategy to emphasise light industry and export-led growth. Light industrial output was vital for a developing country that was working with relatively little capital. With its short gestation period, low capital requirements, and high foreign exchange export earnings, the revenues that the light-manufacturing sector generated could be reinvested in more technologically advanced production and further capital expenditures and investments.

The capital invested in heavy industry largely came from the banking system, and most of that capital came from consumer deposits.

One of the first items of the Deng reforms was to prevent reallocation of profits except through taxation or through the banking system; hence, the reallocation in more "advanced" industries was somewhat indirect.

The PRC decided to accelerate the modernisation process by stepping up the volume of foreign trade, especially the purchase of machinery..

Deng also attracted foreign companies to a series of Special Economic Zones where capitalist business practices were encouraged.

Another important focus of the reforms was the need to improve labour productivity. New material incentives and bonus systems were introduced. Rural markets selling peasants' homegrown products and the surplus products of communes were revived. Not only did rural markets increase agricultural output, they stimulated industrial development as well. With peasants able to sell surplus agricultural yields on the open market, domestic consumption stimulated industrialisation, and also created political support for more difficult economic reforms.

Export orientation was two pronged: fostering (1) local industry and (2) foreign investment in Special Economic Zones (SEZs) (see further on), through market systems with socialist objectives in control.

A parallel set of political reforms were launched by Deng and his allies in the 1980s, but ended in 1989, due to the crackdown on Tiananmen Square halting further political liberalisation. The reforms briefly went into stagnation after that, but were revived after Deng Xiaoping's southern tour in 1992.

The reforms led to significant economic growth for China within the successive decades; this phenomenon has since been seen as an "economic miracle". In 2010, China overtook Japan as the

world's second largest economy by nominal GDP, before overtaking the United States in 2016 as the world's largest.

At the beginning of reform and Opening Up, Deng further proposed the idea of "xiaokang" or a "moderately prosperous society" in 1979. Originally Confucian, it is used to describe a society composed of a functional middle class.

Special Economic Zones (SEZ)

Special Economic Zones of China (SEZ) are designated zones in China with unique economic policies and regulations often for business with foreign nations and enterprises. These zones typically foster free-market orientated business regulations compared to the rest of the country. They were established to attract foreign investment, boost different forms of economic growth, and facilitate experimentation with market reforms. These zones can be attributed to the policies of Deng during the early 1980s.

One of the most influential reforms under Deng was establishing four SEZs along the South-eastern coast of China, with Shenzhen, Shantou, and Zhuhai located in Guangdong and Xiamen located in Fujian province. These initial SEZs were all established from 1980 to 1981.

As of 2024, there have been 3 additional special economic zones. In 1988, Hainan became the fifth SEZ. In 1990, Pudong district in Shanghai became the sixth SEZ. In 2009, Binhai district in Tianjin became the seventh SEZ.

In SEZs, foreign and domestic trade and investment are conducted without the authorisation of the Chinese central government in Beijing with tax and business incentives to attract foreign investment and technology. Trade was originally controlled by China's centralised government. However, these special zones are where market-driven capitalist policies are implemented to entice foreign capitalist investments in China.

SEZs are granted more market-oriented economic policies and flexible governmental measures. This allows SEZs to utilize economic management which is more attractive to foreign and domestic businesses

In 1986, China then added 14 additional cities to the list of special economic zones. By the 2020s, the combined number of SEZs, national-level new areas, and free trade zones in China reached 45.

As of 2025, China has significantly expanded its SEZs which have become standardised across the country, leading to both futurist speculation of the country and criticism. Many similar areas are in development in hopes to promote key industries and attract further foreign investment.

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Infrastructure

United Nations Technical Assistance

The modernisation of science and technology proved to be more of a theoretical goal than an achievable objective. This was primarily due to decades-long isolation of Chinese scientists from the international community, outmoded and outdated universities, and an overall lack of access to advanced scientific equipment, information technology, and management know-how

Recognizing the need for technical assistance, the Chinese Government elicited the support of the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) in the fall of 1978 to scope out and provide financial resources for the implementation of an initial complement of targeted projects.

The initial projects from 1979 to 1984 included the establishment of overseas on-the-job training and academic programmes, set-up of information processing centers at key government units, and the development of methods to make informed decisions within the Chinese context based on market principles.

The key advisor to the Chinese government on behalf of the UNDP was Jack Fensterstock of the United States. This first technical assistance effort (CPR/79-001) by the UNDP led to the entry of large-scale multilateral funding agencies, including the World Bank and the Asian Development Bank.

As part of the effort to pursue the Four Modernizations, the Chinese government revived plans for the Three Gorges Dam, emphasizing the need to develop hydroelectric power.

Singapore Vocational Training Technical Assistance

GFPillay Consultancy, Singapore, my firm then active in the field, was engaged in the early 1990s as off-shore consultants by the World Bank, through their consultant Jean Segerstrom, in relation to their loan to China for development of the latter's engineering vocational training infrastructure. Through this project, the unique Instructional Training Methodology developed at Nanyang Polytechnic by its then Principal and CEO, Mr. Lin Cheng Ton, was transferred and incorporated into China's national system.

It may also be mentioned here that GFPillay Consultancy also participated at that time, in January 1990, in UNESCO's first ever team to foray into Vietnam, the first by any UN agency in fact, to undertake a review and appraise the needs of their educational system. This provided the backdrop to my engagement by the World Bank for the China project which followed.

Nor, is it out of place to record that, in 1993, the Hong Kong Vocational Training authority invited GFPillay Consultancy to participate a daylong seminar. This was close to the return transfer of Hong Kong back to China.

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Political and Social

Boluan Fanzheng

Due to the institutional disorder and political turmoil from the Mao era, Deng's earliest efforts were to launch the Boluan Fanzheng programme which sought to restore order by rehabilitating those who were persecuted during cultural Revolution.

Deng first spoke publicly of the ideas of Boluan Fanzheng in September 1977, roughly a year after Mao's death and subsequent to the arrest of the Gang of Four.

Boluan Fanzheng simply means "returning things to normal" "setting things right". It refers to a period of significant sociopolitical reforms to correct the mistakes of the Cultural Revolution and restore order in the country.

The Chinese government gradually dismantled the many distinctly Maoist policies associated with the Cultural Revolution, and rehabilitated millions of people who had been targeted during its decade of turmoil.

Boluan Fanzheng lasted until early the 1980s, after which the primary focus of the CCP and the Chinese government shifted from class struggle to economic modernisation.

The subsequent speed of China's transformation in this period from one of the poorest countries to one of the world's largest economies is unmatched in history.

Restoration of Five Black Categories

In addition to the "rightists" previously restored beginning from the 1957s, the CCP decided in January 1979 to abolish the other four discriminated social categories, namely the "Five Black Categories" as follows –

- .(1) Landlords
- .(2) Rich Farmers

- .(3) Counter-Revolutionaries
- .(4) Bad Influences (eg thieves and petty criminals)
- .(5) Right Wingers (previously included in 1957 anti-rightists)

The original five categories were expanded to nine categories, further including traitors, spies, capitalist roaders and intellectuals.

According to official statistics, by 1984, around 4.4 million "landlords" and "rich farmers" had been rehabilitated, and a total of more than 20 million people who were labelled as members of the "four black categories" or their families had received rectification in their social status.

New Enlightenment

The New Enlightenment movement was a massive social and cultural movement that originated in the late 1970s and lasted for over a decade.

Growing out of the "1978 Truth Criterion Discussion" period, the New Enlightenment is widely regarded as a new wave within Chinese society since the May The Fourth movement in 1919. The decade of the 1980s has thus been called the Age of New Enlightenment in China.

The theme of the New Enlightenment movement included promoting democracy and science, embracing humanism, the rule of law and human rights, while opposing the ideology of the Cultural Revolution.

The movement gave rise to a number of new genres, There was the growth of the publication industry, the birth of new music genres, Chinese rock, the Chinese film industry, etc. The New Enlightenment movement ended due to the Tiananmen Square massacre in June 1989.

After Deng's southern tour in early 1992, however, the academic and intellectual circles thrived again but became divided, forming two major stream, Liberalism and a New Left Wing, that emerged critical of Dengism which emphasised market liberalisation and privatisation to promote economic growth. On the other hand, traditional intellectuals quickly lost their leadership role in social development.

Beijing Spring

The **Beijing Spring** refers to a brief period of political liberation during the Boluan Fanzheng period. It began as the Democratic Wall movement in Beijing, which occurred in 1978 and 1979. The name is derived from an analogous event which occurred in Czechoslovakia in 1968.

During the Beijing Spring, the general public was allowed greater freedom to criticise the government than the Chinese people had previously been allowed.

Thousands of people put up big character posters on a long brick wall of Xidan Street in Beijing, to protest about the political and social issues. The wall became known as the **Democracy Wall of Xidan**. Under acquiescence of the Chinese government, other kinds of protest activities, such as unofficial journals and demonstrations, were also soon spreading out in major cities of China.

This short period of political liberation was known as the Chinese democratic movement or the "Beijing Spring". Most of this criticism was directed towards the Cultural Revolution and the government's behaviour during that time.

[The phrase "Beijing Spring" was also used during a more recent period of political thaw in the PRC from September 1997 to mid-November 1998. During this 'new Beijing Spring' the Chinese authorities relaxed some control over political expression and organisation. The relatively trouble-free hand-over of Hong Kong and the death of Deng Xiaoping in early 1997 were precursors to this brief period of liberalisation.)

One Child Policy

In 1979, the Chinese government instituted a one-child policy to try to control its rapidly increasing population. The government had already enacted an aggressive family planning policy and fertility rates were already dropping sharply. Simultaneously there were major market-oriented economic reforms, which launched very rapid growth and migration to cities, which also reduced fertility. The policy was highly controversial in rural areas (where children were an asset in farm work) and interfered with the strong demand for sons.

[It helped solve the problem of famine, but by 2010 was leading to a major demographic disaster, with too many old retired people supported by too few workers. China returned to a two-child policy in 2015, then to a three-child policy in 2021, and finally abolished any limit later that year.)

Education and Science and Technology

Deng championed China's Nine-Year Compulsory Education programme and oversaw the launch of the 863 Program to promote science and technology, which has been absorbed alongside and within Program 973 in the "National Key R&D Program" since 2018.

“One Country Two Systems”

Deng helped negotiate the eventual return of Hong Kong and Macau to China (which took place after his death) and developed the principle of “one country two systems”.

Labour Productivity

The reforms carried out by Deng and his allies gradually led China away from a command economy and critically opened it up to foreign investments and technology the vast potential of its labour force - thereby transforming China into one of the world's fastest-growing economies.

TIME Person of The Year

During the course of his leadership, Deng was named the Time Person of The Year for 1978 and 1985.

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Tiananmen Square Massacre 1989

Despite his contributions to China's modernisation, Deng's legacy is marked by controversy. He ordered the military crackdown on the 1989 Tiananmen Square, which ended his political reforms and remains a subject of global criticism.

The Tiananmen Square Protests were student-led demonstrations held in Tiananmen Square, Beijing, lasting from 15 April to 4 June 1989. After weeks of unsuccessful attempts between the demonstrators and the Chinese government to find a peaceful resolution, the Chinese government deployed troops to occupy the square on the night of 3 June in what is referred to as the Tiananmen Square massacre.

The protests were precipitated by the death of pro-reform CCP General Secretary Hu Yaobang in April 1989 amid the backdrop of anxieties among the people and political elite about the country's future.

General Secretary Hu Yaobang was denounced thoroughly by conservatives and was forced to resign on 16 January 1989, aiming at his political liberalisation, and Western-inspired ideas in general.

The reforms of the 1980s had led to a burgeoning marked economy that benefited some people but seriously disadvantaged others, while the one-party political system faced a challenge to its legitimacy. Common grievances included inflation, corruption, limited preparedness of graduates for the new economy, and restrictions on political participation.

Although they were highly disorganised and their goals varied, the students called for things like the rollback of the removal of "iron bowl" jobs, greater accountability, constitutional due process, democracy and freedom of the press. Workers' protests were generally focused on inflation and the erosion of welfare. These groups united around anti-corruption demands, adjusting economic policies, and protecting social security. At the height of the protests, about one million people assembled in the square.

As the protests developed, the authorities responded with both conciliatory and hardline tactics, exposing deep divisions within the party leadership. By May, a student-led hunger-strike galvanised support around the country for the demonstrators, and the protests spread to some 400 cities.

On 20 May, the state government declared martial law, and as many as 300,000 troops were mobilised to Beijing.

Several weeks of standoffs and violent confrontations between the army and demonstrators left many on both sides severely injured. A meeting held among the CCP's top leadership on 1 June concluded with a decision to clear the square. The troops advanced into central parts of Beijing in the early morning hours of 4 June and engaged in bloody clashes with demonstrators attempting to block them, in which many people – demonstrators, bystanders, and soldiers – were killed. Estimates of the death toll vary from several hundred to several thousand, with thousands more wounded. Various Western media outlets labelled the crackdown a "massacre".

In the aftermath of the protests, the Chinese government suppressed other protests around China, carried out mass arrests of protesters, and strictly controlled coverage of the events in the press.

More broadly, the suppression ended the political and economic and halted the policies of liberalisation of the 1980s, which were only partly resumed after Deng Xiaoping's Southern China Tour in 1992.

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Social and Economic Challenges

Political Transition

From the first half of 1986, Deng repeatedly called for the revival of political reforms, as further economic reforms were hindered by the original political system with the increasing trend of corruption and economic inequality.

A five-man committee to study the feasibility of political reform was established in September 1986. Deng's intention was to boost administrative efficiency, further separate responsibilities of the Party and the government, and eliminate bureaucracy. However he retained the one-party framework, and opposed the implementation of Western-style constitutionalism.

In October 1987, at the CCP 13th National Congress, Zhao Ziyang, generally a conservative, was elected to be the new CCP Secretary General. Zhao argued that socialism in China was still in its primary stage and, taking Deng's speech in 1980 as a guideline, he detailed steps to be taken for political reform.

While there is no date for his resignation given, and while he continued to have a major influence until his death in 1997, Deng is generally deemed to have withdrawn from direct leadership from now.

The Politburo also issued a list of "seven things" regarding "matters of universal concern to the masses", with party corruption as the top priority.

Jiang Semi was appointed Secretary General on 12 Jun 1989. Jiang was also appointed as the chairman of the Central Military Commission on 9 November 1989, succeeding Deng, and President of the PRC on 27 March 1993. This marked the start of the arrangement in which the paramount leader of China simultaneously serves as Party leader, president and chair of the CMC

Challenges to Reforms and Opening-up

Deng's reforms aimed to decrease the state's role in the economy and gradually allow private production in agriculture and industry. By 1981, roughly 73% of rural farms had been de-collectivized, and 80% of state-owned enterprises were permitted to retain their profits.

While the reforms were generally well received by the public, concerns grew over a series of social problems which the changes brought about, including nepotism on the part of elite party bureaucrats.

A glimpse at some of the issues faced by a gigantic one-party command economy adapting capitalist features is worth our attention, an arrear not often frequented by the layman:

. (a) The state-mandated pricing system, in place since the 1950s, had long kept prices fixed at low levels. The initial reforms created a two-tier system where some prices were fixed while others were allowed to fluctuate. In a market with chronic shortages, price fluctuation allowed people with powerful connections to buy goods at low prices and sell at market prices. Party bureaucrats in charge of economic management had enormous incentives to engage in such arbitrage. Discontent over corruption reached a fever pitch with the public.

. (b) Following their 1988 meeting the party leadership under Deng agreed to implement a transition to a market-based pricing system. News of the relaxation of price controls triggered waves of cash withdrawals, buying, and hoarding all over China. The government panicked and rescinded the price reforms in less than two weeks, but there was a pronounced impact for much longer. Inflation soared; official indices reported that the consumer price index had increased by 30% in Beijing between 1987 and 1988, leading to panic among salaried workers that they could no longer afford staple goods.

, (c) In the new market economy, unprofitable state-owned enterprises were pressured to cut costs. This threatened a vast proportion of the population that relied on the "iron rice bowl". i.e., social benefits such as job security, medical care, and subsidised housing.

. (d) The state-directed education system did not produce enough graduates to meet increased demand in the areas of agriculture, light industry, services, and foreign investment. Moreover, private companies no longer needed to accept students assigned to them by the state, and many high-paying jobs were offered based on nepotism and favouritism. Gaining a good state-assigned placement meant navigating a highly inefficient bureaucracy that gave power to officials who had little expertise in areas under their jurisdiction.

. (e) Simultaneously, the party's nominally socialist ideology faced a legitimacy crisis as it gradually adopted capitalist practices. Private enterprise gave rise to profiteers who took advantage of lax regulations and who often flaunted their wealth in front of those who were less well off.

. (f) Popular discontent was brewing over unfair wealth distribution. Greed, not skill, appeared to be the most crucial factor in success. There was widespread public disillusionment concerning the country's future. People wanted change, yet the power to define "the correct path" continued to rest solely in the unelected government's hand.

The comprehensive and wide-ranging reforms created political differences over the pace of marketisation of the workings of the economy and the control over the ideology that came with it, opening a deep chasm within the central leadership.

The conservatives said that the reforms had gone too far and advocated a return to greater state control to ensure social stability and to better align with the party's socialist ideology.

Deng Xiaoping, while affixed on his Reforms and Opening Up, warned that blindly worshipping Western lifestyles, capitalism, and multi-party systems undermined China's socialist ideology, traditional values, and the party's leadership

Deng Xiaoping's Southern Tour

Deng Xiaoping's southern tour of China (the SEZs provinces in particular) took place from January 18 to February 21, 1992. The talks and remarks made by Deng resumed and reinforced the implementation of his programmes in which had come to a halt after the military crackdown - After Tiananmen Square, there was a lack of belief in the CCP both at home and abroad.

The 1992 Southern Tour was a critical point in the modern history of China, as it saved the reforms and the capital market that had been built up and preserved societal stability. It also was reassuring to foreign countries who had begun to invest large amounts of money into China.

During the southern tour, Deng emphasised that "those who do not promote reform should be brought down from their leadership positions". This forced Jiang Zemin to support and continue the Reforms and Opening-up program.

In November 1989, the CCP Central Committee passed a resolution stating that the pace of reforms was too fast and decided to overhaul the changes. There were fears and concerns within the CCP that further reforms might turn China into capitalist country. Deng Xiaoping, on the other hand, saw the dissolution of the Soviet Union as more of a reason to open up China.

He paid visits to several high-tech companies, where he underlined the importance of science and technology and called on Chinese overseas students to come back to their motherland.

Deng's Notable remarks

"Let some areas and some people get rich first, to spur and assist other areas and other people, and gradually achieve common prosperity".

In one of the most consequential speeches addressing Reform and Opening Up, Deng stated: "The essential difference between socialism and capitalism is not whether state planning dominates the market or vice versa. The planned economy is not equivalent to socialism, and in a capitalist economy, there is also planning. Both planning and markets are means of economics. Are securities and the stock markets good or bad? Could socialism also use them? We are allowed to take a look, but more importantly, we should try it out. For socialism to gain an advantage it must bravely absorb and learn from all the achievements of civilisations created by human society."

Other notable remarks from Deng during his southern tour included:

- .1. Cat Theory: "I don't care if the cat is black or white, so long as it catches mice, which was originally published by Deng in the 1960s but became widely known after the tour.
- .2 "Planned economy does not equal socialism and market economy does not equal capitalism. Socialism can have market mechanisms as well, and government planning and market are both economic means."
- .3 "Development is of overriding importance."
- .5 "Those who do not promote reform should be brought down from their leadership positions."
- .6 "We should do more and engage less in empty talk."
- .7 "Go to learn from abroad, especially from **Singapore**. They have a system and governance on how to manage the society."

Effects

Jiang eventually sided with Deng in April 1992, and the national media finally reported Deng's southern tour almost two months after it was completed. Observers suggest that Jiang's submission to Deng's policies had solidified his position as Deng's heir apparent.

Deng emphasised prioritising economic growth over rigid ideological partisanship, declaring, "development is the only hard truth." However, party conservatives criticised this approach as a betrayal of socialism, warning of risks such as inequality and corruption. These contrasting views

reveal a complex reception, where Deng's vision inspired hope among reformists while fuelling scepticism among traditionalists.

Deng reiterated the general policy that 'some areas must get rich before others', and asserted that the wealth from coastal regions will eventually be transferred to aid economic construction inland. The theory, however, faced numerous challenges when put into practice, as provincial governments moved to protect their own interests. Although private elements of the economy had existed since 1978, these forms of private ownership were first legally acknowledged during the southern tour.

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Achievements

It was the Reforms and Opening Up of Deng Xiaoping that enabled the Chinese economy to catch up with and take its place in the world today as one of the great powers.

In the years immediately following the tour, economic growth was rapid. Growth was approximately 13% in both 1992 and in 1993. Investment in coastal areas of China greatly increased, and foreign investment as a whole reached US\$ 25 billion in 1993.

Deng had also been instrumental in devising and negotiating the "One Country Two Systems" formula for the return transfer of Hong Kong and Macau.

China had emerged into the twentieth century as the country with the largest population in the largest land area, but among the poorest, with barely subsistence levels of gross domestic product (GDP.) it went through a political consolidation phase, emerging as a communist centrally planned command economy from 1949. China has practiced and is still today founded ideologically on Marxism-Leninism, adapted to Chinese characteristics.

Deng's Reforms and Opening Up program since 1980 sought to incorporate advantageous practices from capitalist economies, to activate and stimulate the socialist economy. These include market mechanisms and capital participation, and trade and integration with the world economy. The underlying development strategy was the application of contemporary technology to release the productivity of China's vast labour resources.

His two successors, Jiang Zemin and Xi Jinping have kept to the same policies of a socialist-managed mixed market economy operating in the open world economy

The results have been called the "Chinese economic miracle". The growth and catch up rates have been phenomenal. Here are some figures of China's GDP:

Table 5A.2
Economic Growth of China, 1950-2400.

Year	Pop Millions	GDP(PPPP=) USD millions	GDP Per capita	GDP growth over previous
1950	544.0			
1980	982.4	191.15	195	
2000	1,264.	1211.33	959	4.9 times
2200	1,425	14,687.74	10,409	10.8 times
2300	1,426.1	17,794.78	12,614	21%
2400		18,273.36		

<https://www.macrotrends.net/global-metrics/countries/chn/china/gdp-gross-domestic-product>

<https://www.china-briefing.com/news/chinas-economy-in-2024-gdp-trade-fdi/>

https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/List_of_countries_by_largest_historical_GDP

Deng was succeeded as paramount ruler by Jiang Zemin (1989-2002) and Xi Jinping (2012 to date). Fundamentally Marxist-Maoist in ideology, they have continually apply Deng's reforms. We briefly mention their main contributions, and then summarise China's position in the world today, at which point we also draw our inferences in relation to our main topic

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Jiang Zemin

Jiang was appointed as the Mayor of Shanghai in 1985 later being as well as a member of the CCP Politburo in 1987. Jiang came to power unexpectedly as a compromise candidate following the 1989 Tiananmen Square massacre. Jiang consolidated his hold on power to become the "paramount leader" in the country during the 1990s.

Urged by Deng's tour in 1992, Jiang officially introduced the term "socialist market economy" later that year. The return of Hong Kong in 1997 and Macau in 1999, and the entry into the World Trade Organisation were the landmarks of his career.

Ideology

Socialist Market Economy (SME)

The "socialist market economy" (SME) is a term first officially introduced by Jiang Zemin to define the economic system of the Peoples republic of China. The system is a market economy with the predominance of public-ownership and state-owned enterprises. The term "socialist market economy" describes the goal of China's economic reforms.

Three Represents

Under Jiang Zemin, Deng's Theory along with aspects of Mao Zedong Thought and Marxist-Leninism were assimilated into a socio-political theory known as the "Three Represents", and this theory was added to the CCP constitution in 2002.

The Three Represents, officially the Theory of Three Represents, is a political doctrine that defines the role of the Chinese Communist Party (CCP) in Chinese society. It legitimised the entry of private business owners and bourgeois elements into the CCP. It was also written into the Chinese constitution in 2004.

What Jiang Zemin Taught -

The Three Represents Theory

The Three Represents results from Jiang Zemin's efforts to grapple with the diverse class backgrounds of party members and their sometimes-conflicting material interests. Based on Mao's premise that the Communist Party should serve the people, it became important as China's private sector grew to bring "worthy people from all sectors who are loyal to the motherland and to socialism" into the Party.

In Jiang's speech on the Three Represents on the 80th anniversary of the founding of the CCP in 2001, he claimed that the expansion of "working class" would help the party remain advanced as the vanguard of the working class by expanding its popular support and increasing its social influence.

Jiang made a statement on the concept of the working class that it includes intellectuals:

"With intellectuals being part of the working class, the scientific, technical and educational level of the working class has been raised considerably. Consequently,

some workers have changed their jobs. But this has not changed the status of the Chinese working class. On the contrary, this will serve to improve the overall quality of the working class and give play to its advantages as a group in the long run. The Chinese working class has always been the basic force for promoting the advanced productive forces in China. Our Party must remain the vanguard of the working class and unswervingly and wholeheartedly rely on the working class."

The theory requires the CCP to represent (promote) (1) the development of China's advanced productive forces; (2) the orientation of China's advanced culture; and (3) the fundamental interests of the overwhelming majority of the Chinese people.

Jiang's theory was the subject of significant internal debate. Supporters viewed it as a further development of socialism with Chinese characteristics or a mechanism to incorporate bourgeois elements into the discipline of the party. Certain segments within the CCP criticised the Three Represents as being un-Marxist and a betrayal of basic Marxist values. Someone else perhaps substantively described the theory as "Marxism for contemporary China".

Jiang said that by representing Chinese people in three levels, the party used the interests and demands of the overwhelming majority of the people to replace the specific interests of people from different quarters, especially the class nature of the working class.

One observer remarked that the "Three Represents" theory transformed the CCP from a revolutionary party to a ruling party. The CCP could keep its legitimacy without promoting any revolutionary movement or keeping the ideal of egalitarianism.

The theory is most notable for allowing capitalists officially referred to as the "new social strata" to join the party on the grounds that they engaged in "honest labour and work" and through their labour contributed "to build[ing] socialism with Chinese characteristics".

At the time Jiang announced the theory, most entrepreneurs who were members of the CCP had been party members before starting their businesses. This change allowed for a new cohort of party members who could join after having had success in business. In recent years (as of 2022), around 30-35% of Chinese entrepreneurs have been party members.

The Three Represents helped co-opt economic elites and extend the party's reach into the growing private sector. The Three Represents legitimatised privately-owned enterprises in the context of the socialist market economy.

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Interim Progress

Sino-US relations took a downward turn in 1981–1982. The Chinese took umbrage at Reagan's vocal anti-communism, even though it was mainly directed at the Soviet Union, as well as continued US arms sales to Taiwan.

By 1984, Sino-US relations had improved and President Reagan visited Beijing in April–May of that year.

In general however, China's foreign policy pronouncements were much more restrained than in the Mao era, and Beijing stated that its aim was now world peace rather than world revolution.

In 1997 and 1998, large-scale privatisation occurred, in which all state enterprises, except a few large monopolies, were liquidated and their assets sold to private investors. Between 2001 and 2004, the number of state-owned enterprises decreased by 48 percent.

During the same period, Jiang reduced tariffs, trade barriers and regulations; reformed the banking system; dismantled much of the Mao-era social welfare system; and forced the Chinese army (PLA) to divest itself of military-run businesses; and reduced inflation.

The domestic private sector first exceeded 50% of GDP in 2005 and has further expanded since. Also in 1999, China was able to surpass Japan as the largest economy in Asia. However, some state monopolies still remained, such as in petroleum and banking.

In 2005 to 2012 the CCP took a more conservative approach towards reforms and began to reverse some of Deng Xiaoping's reforms. The government adopted more egalitarian and populist policies. It increased subsidies and control over the health care sector, increased funding for education, halted privatisation, and adopted a loose monetary policy, which led to the formation of a property bubble in which property prices tripled.

The privileged state sector was the primary recipient of government investment, which, under the new administration, promoted the rise of large "national champions" which could compete with large foreign corporations. Nevertheless, the share of SOEs in the total number of companies have continued to fall, dropping to 5%, though their share of total output remained at 26%.

Exchange rates for the yuan were also liberalised, leading the yuan to rise by 31% against the US dollar from 2005 to 2012.

China's economic growth has averaged around 10%, while the economy surpassed the United Kingdom, France, Germany and Japan.

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Xi Jinping

Since 1989, the General Secretary of the Central Committee of the Chinese Communist Party has been the leader of the CCP, the sole ruling party of the PRC. The general secretary has been the paramount ruler of the PRC.

The general secretary is elected during a Plenary session of the Central Committee. The general secretary serves as an ex officio member of the Politburo Standing Committee (PSC), China's de facto top decision-making body. The gentleman in this case is Xi Jinping.

Ideology

Xi Jinping Thought on Socialism with Chinese Characteristics for a New Era, commonly abbreviated as Xi Jinping Thought, is an ideological doctrine created during his leadership that combines Chinese Marxism and national rejuvenation.

Xi Jinping Thought "builds on and further enriches" previous party ideologies and has also been called the "Marxism of contemporary China and of the 21st century". The theory's main elements are summarised in the ten affirmations, the fourteen commitments, and the thirteen areas of achievements.

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It was first officially mentioned at the National Congress of the CCP in 2013 in which it was incorporated into the CCP constitution, leading to a further elevation of Xi's status in the CCP. On 11 March 2018, the preamble of the Constitution of China was amended to mention Xi Jinping Thought.

What is Xi Jinping Thought?

Socialism with Chinese characteristics is the dialectical unity of the theoretical logic of scientific socialism and the historical logic of China's social development.

First of all, Socialism with Chinese Characteristics is socialism, not any other "ism." The guiding principles of scientific socialism,²⁹ thus cannot be abandoned. Our Party has always emphasized

²⁹ - Scientific socialism in Marxism is the application of historical materialism to the development of socialism, as not just a practical and achievable outcome of historical processes, but the only possible outcome. It contrasts with Utopian Socialism by

adherence to the basic principles of scientific socialism but adapted to the particular conditions of China.

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It was Marxist-Leninism and Mao Zedong Thought that guided the Chinese people out of the long march and established the New China, and it was socialism with Chinese characteristics that led to the rapid development of China.

According to Xi, "the consolidation and development of the socialist system will require its own long period of history... it will require the tireless struggle of generations, up to ten generations."

Xi has praised Karl Marx as "the greatest thinker of modern times" whose teachings enlightened the working classes of the world and has called upon party cadres to adopt Marxist revolutionary principles as a "way of life".

On the relationship with capitalist nations, Xi said, "Marx and Engels analysis of the basic contradictions in capitalist society is not outdated, nor is the historical materialist view that capitalism is bound to die out and socialism is bound to win." Xi stated: "The fundamental reason why some of our comrades have weak ideals and faltering beliefs is that their views lack a firm grounding in historical materialism.

Xi showed great interest in why the Soviet Union dissolved and how to avoid that failure in China: Why did the Soviet Union disintegrate? An important reason was that the struggle in the field of ideology was extremely intense, completely negating the history of the Soviet Union, negating the history of the Communist Party of the Soviet Union, negating Leninism, negating Stalinism, and creating historical nihilism thinking. Party organs at all levels had lost their functions, the military was no longer under Party leadership. In the end, the Communist Party of the Soviet Union, a great party, was scattered, the Soviet Union, a great socialist country, disintegrated. This is a cautionary tale!

Xi first used the phrase "Thought on Socialism with Chinese Characteristics for a New Era" in his speech delivered on the opening day of the 19th Party Congress in October 2017. The Congress then affirmed Xi's speech as a guiding political and military ideology of the CCP and approved its incorporation into the constitution of the party.,

The incorporation made Xi the third Chinese leader (after Mao Zedong and Deng Xiaoping) to have their names incorporated into the list of fundamental doctrines of the CCP. Xi promised to make China strong, propelling the country into a "new era".

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Commitments and Achievements

Xi Jinping Thought is summarised into the 10 affirmations, the 14 commitments and the 13 areas of achievements

During his speech to the 19th CCP National Congress, Xi Jinping introduced the "eight affirmations" which later developed to the "ten affirmations" with the addition of the 7th and 10th points during the Sixth Plenum of the 19th Central Committee in 2021.

Fourteen commitments

Ensuring Communist Party of China leadership over all forms of work in China.
The Communist Party of China should take a people-centric approach for the public interest.

basing itself upon material conditions instead of concoctions and ideas, where "the final causes of all social changes and political revolutions are to be sought, not in men's brains, not in men's better insights into eternal truth and justice, but in changes in the modes of production and exchange. They are to be sought, not in the philosophy, but in the economics of each particular epoch.

The continuation of "comprehensive deepening of reforms".

Adopting new science-based ideas for "innovative, coordinated, green, open and shared development".

Following Chinese characteristics with "people as the masters of the country".

Governing China with the Rule of Law.

"

Practising socialist core values, including Chinese Marxism and Leninism.

"Improving people's livelihood and well-being is the primary goal of development".

Coexist well with nature with "energy conservation and environmental protection" policies and "contribute to global ecological safety".

Strengthen the national security of China.

The Communist Party of China should have "absolute leadership over" China's Peoples' Liberation Army.

Promoting one country two systems. For Hong Kong and Macau, with a future of "complete national unification to follow the One-China Principle and the 1992 Consensus for Taiwan.

Establish a common destiny between the Chinese people and other peoples around the world with a "peaceful international environment".

|

Improve party discipline in the Communist Party of China.

Thirteen achievements

In upholding the Party's overall leadership

In comprehensively and strictly governing the party

In economic construction

In comprehensively deepening reform and opening up

In political construction

In comprehensively governing the country according the law

In cultural constructions

In social construction

In the construction of ecological civilization

In national defence and army building

In safeguarding national security

In adhering to one country, two systems and promoting reunification of the motherland

In diplomatic work.

Xi Jinping Thought seeks to reinvigorate the mass line. In economic matters, Xi Jinping Thought highlights the historical importance of state owned enterprises.

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Economic Policies

Mass Line

The mass line is a political, organisational, and leadership methodology developed by Mao Zedong and the CCP. In mass line methodology, leadership formulates policy based on theory, implements it based on the people's real world conditions, revises the theory and policy based on actual practice, and uses that revised theory as the guide to future practice. This process is summarised as leadership "from the masses, to the masses", repeated indefinitely.

Free Market Economy

Under Xi Jinping, the CCP announced that "market forces" would begin to play a "decisive" role in allocating resources. Xi launched the Shanghai Free Trade Zone in August 2013, seen as part of the reforms.

State-owned enterprises (SOEs)

It is largely the view of the Chinese leadership, that without the important material foundation that state-owned enterprises (SOEs) have laid for China's development, without the major innovations and key core technologies achieved by state-owned enterprises, and without state-owned enterprises' long-term commitment to a large number of social responsibilities, there would be no economic independence and national security for China, no continuous improvement in people's lives, and no socialist China standing tall in the East or the world. Developed into a roughly three-tiered ladder from local to provincial to national, they have formed the tactical economic baseline delivering the revolutionary productive force of the nation.

The Xi era has also been marked by economic opening, greater market-oriented decision-making and discontinuation of support for poorly managed state-owned enterprises.

Economic Structuring

Under Xi, there has been a clear movement of interest to involve the Party and business enterprises. At least 288 firms had revised their corporate charters by 2017 to allow the CCP greater influence in corporate management, and to reflect the party line. This trend also includes Hong Kong listed firms, who have traditionally downplayed their party links, but were now "redrafting bylaws to formally establish party committees that previously existed only at the group level."

Xi has increased the power of CCP bodies in economic decision-making, decreasing the influence of the State Council and the premier. His administration has made it easier for banks to work, issue credit, increase foreign participation in the bond market, and has increased the national currency global role, helping it to join IMF's basket of currencies.

Xi's administration has also reoriented the economy to increase self-reliance, and accordingly launched China Standards 2035, which have sought to scale up and displace US dominance in various high-tech sectors.

Some analysts have added that the reform era has been scaled down significantly during the leadership of Xi when the reformists lost power, citing that Xi has reasserted state control over different aspects of Chinese society, including the economy.

Since 2021, Xi has promoted the term "common prosperity", a term which he defined as an "essential requirement of socialism", described as affluence for all and said entailed reasonable adjustments to excess incomes. Common prosperity has been used as the justification for crackdowns on the perceived "excesses" of several sectors, most prominently tech and tutoring industries.

World Bank Review

"Since China began to open up and reform its economy in 1978, GDP growth has averaged over 9 percent a year, and almost 800 million people have lifted themselves out of poverty. There have also been significant improvements in access to health, education, and other services over the same period.

China is now an upper-middle-income country. Although China eradicated extreme poverty in 2020, an estimated 17.0 percent of the population lived on less than \$6.85 a day (in 2017 PPP terms), the World Bank's Upper-Middle-Income Country (UMIC) poverty line, in 2021.

China's strong growth has been based on investment and export-oriented manufacturing, an approach that has largely reached its limits, and has led to economic, social, and environmental imbalances. Reducing these imbalances will require a shift from manufacturing to high value services, from investment to consumption, and from high to low carbon intensity.

In recent years, growth has moderated in the face of structural constraints, including declining working age population, diminishing returns to investment, and slowing productivity growth. The challenge going forward is to find new drivers of growth while addressing the social and environmental legacies of China's previous development path.

The role of the state also needs to continue to evolve, focusing on providing a clear, fair, and stable business environment, strengthening the regulatory system and the rule of law to further support the market system, as well as ensuring equitable access to public services to all citizens.

Global environmental problems cannot be solved without China's engagement. Given its size, China is central to many regional and global development issues. Although not the main source of historical cumulative emissions, China today accounts for nearly a third of annual global carbon dioxide and 30 percent of the world's greenhouse gas emissions – with per capita emissions now surpassing those of the European Union, and on par with the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development average. Achieving China's goals of peaking carbon emissions before 2030 and reaching carbon neutrality before 2060 is crucial for mitigating global climate change.

China's growing economy is also an important source of global demand. Its economic rebalancing will create new opportunities for manufacturing exporters, though it may reduce demand for commodities over the medium-term.

Despite multiple headwinds, China's economy grew at a robust rate of 5.0 percent in the first half of 2024, supported by consumer spending on services, exports, and investment in manufacturing and public infrastructure. However, growth remains uneven with its momentum slowing since the second quarter. Sluggish domestic demand has contributed to low inflation, while weak business confidence, partly due to the ongoing property market downturn, continues to dampen economic activity. To support growth and balance risks, the authorities have signaled further policy easing, with additional stimulus measures announced in September. Growth is projected to slow to 4.8 percent in 2024, down from 5.2 percent in 2023.

Over the medium term, China's economy is expected to undergo a structural slowdown. Potential growth has been on a declining trend, reflecting adverse demographics, tepid productivity growth, and rising constraints to a debt-fueled, investment-driven growth model. Structural reforms are needed to reinvigorate the shift to more balanced high-quality growth."³⁰

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Religion in Contemporary China

Marxist-Leninist Communism is an ideology wholly based on materialism, in fact by definition an atheistic ideology. Religion is described as the "opium of the people" that keeps them in economic enslavement.

In China's ideology, she has retained the ideological core of the proceeding, while changing the application aspects to suit Chinese circumstances. Thus, China's "Socialism With Chinese characteristics" shares the Marxist stance on atheism. In contemporary Chinese society there is no place for religion per se. In fact, the official policy is to discourage if not suppress religion as anti-social.

Over 4,000 years, the Chinese people have developed societally in a rich cultural mixture on the one hand of Tian, Huangdi and the Mandate of Heaven and the incredibly diverse folk religions, and on the other hand, the comprehensive philosophical thought and guidance of Lao-Tze and Confucius. The latter governed not only the right way to run the state, but extended guidance in social, family and personal conduct, including ancestor worship, defining exactly what was the good and desirable life. Besides traditional religion, a significant number of Chinese are Buddhist. Christian and Muslim.

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[https://www.worldbank.org/en/country/china/overview#:~:text=China%20is%20now%20an%20upper,\)%20poverty%20line%2C%20in%202021.](https://www.worldbank.org/en/country/china/overview#:~:text=China%20is%20now%20an%20upper,)%20poverty%20line%2C%20in%202021.)

Tradition Religion in China is therefore embedded in the cultural life of the Chinese people, notwithstanding that the younger generations have grown up in an ideologically non-religious world. A significant proportion practice a combination of Buddhism, Taoism and folk religion, while a Confucian world-view still under-pins Chinese society and culture.

Five religions

The Peoples Republic of China government formally recognises five religions: Buddhism, Taoism, Christianity (Catholics and Protestants are recognised separately) and Islam. All religious institutions in the country are required to uphold the leadership of the Chinese Communist Party (CCP), implement Xi Jinping Thought, and promote the "sinicisation" of religion.

Overview

Taoism and Confucianism, followed by Buddhism, constitute the three teachings that have shaped Chinese culture. There are no clear boundaries between these intertwined religious systems, and elements of each enrich popular folk religion.

Taoism is the intellectual base and Confucianism the social framework of Chinese civilisation. To the extent that Confucianism deals with "right conduct" at the family and community levels, it is the cement that binds the building-blocks and remains the enduring (moral) foundation of Chinese society.

The Chinese Communist Party (CCP)—which is officially atheist—does not recognize Huangdi (the Yellow Emperor) as a divine God in a religious sense, but it **actively promotes his worship as a founding ancestor and cultural hero** to bolster national legitimacy. They neither recognise Tian (Heaven) nor "the Mandate of Heaven" as legitimising the communist state.

Chinese folk religion has been the most widespread system of beliefs and practices, and has evolved and adapted since at least the second millennium BCE dynasties. In general, Chinese folk religion involves an allegiance to the "shen" (spirits), which encompass a variety of gods and immortals. These may be natural deities belonging to the environment, or ancient progenitors of human groups, concepts of civility, or culture heroes. They are not recognised as such, neither can the CCP do much about removing them.

Christianity and Islam arrived in China during the 7th century. Christianity did not take root until it was reintroduced in the 16th century. In the early 20th century, Christian communities grew. However, after 1949, foreign missionaries were expelled, and churches brought under government-controlled institutions. After the late 1970s, religious freedoms for Christians improved and new Chinese groups emerged.

Islam has been practiced in Chinese society for 1,400 years. Muslims constitute a minority group in China; according to the latest estimates, they represent between 0.45% and 1.8% of the total population. The greatest concentration of Muslims is in Xinjiang, which has a significant Uyghur population.

National surveys conducted during the early 21st century estimated that 80% of the Chinese population practice some form of folk religion. Some 13–16% of the population are Buddhists, 10% are Taoists; 2.53% are Christians, and 0.83% are Muslims. Many in the intellectual class adhere to Confucianism as a religious identity. Several minorities are particular to specific religions, including Tibetan Buddhism and Islam among Hui and Uyghurs.

Many Chinese do not consider their spiritual beliefs and practices to be a "religion" as such, and do not feel that they must practice any one of them to the exclusion of others. According to one scholar, the "great majority of China's population" participates in religion—the rituals and festivals of the lunar calendar—without being party to any religious institution.

The Chinese are still very much Chinese, despite the overlay of communist ideology. Their great ethnic intellect powers, business acumen (eg. "buy low sell high") and acquisitive skills show every

sign of boosting (if not out-competing) socialism, once they master capitalist economics and leap-frog to the front of technology.

Communism and Religion³¹

With the establishment of the Peoples' Republic of China on 1 Oct 1949, China has adopted the dialectic materialism of Marxist-Leninism to be the national ideology for China, adapted for Chinese characteristics. Its offers its socialist market economy model for the further development of the world.

China's attitude toward religion at the leadership level dates back to 1949. Early CCP leaders denounced religion as linked to "foreign cultural imperialism," "feudalism" and "superstition," and persecuted religious groups across the board.

In the early 20th century, reform-minded officials and intellectuals attacked religion in general as superstitious.. CCP members are prohibited from religious practice while in office. A series of anti-religious campaigns culminated in the Cultural Revolution (1966–1976).

The Cultural Revolution destroyed or forced many observances and religious organisations underground. Following the death of Mao, subsequent leaders have allowed Chinese religious organisations to have more autonomy. In the 1980s and 1990s, the central government began rebuilding places of worship destroyed during the Cultural Revolution, more a cultural rehabilitation..

While communism grew from the oppression of the industrial workers in Europe and Russia, in China it was a transplantation on to a traditional feudal-bound agricultural society, who were called to the role of modern day revolutionary ideologues. Winning the Chinese mind was the essence of the revolution. Stamping out religion was one of the key objectives.

To be permanent, the conversion has had to be total – ideological, cultural, economic and even moral. The communist mission is to sow scientific materialism as the foundation of the socialist market economy which they offer for the common prosperity of all.

As I write this, we are close to a century since the founding of Communist China, and in his classical pragmatism the average Chinese has pretty much adapted to his communist world as well as the democratic international environment to which he is increasingly exposed.

But the new Chinese identity has still to take final shape. The communists themselves realise that the socialist principles of common prosperity are going to be in a contest with ingrained traditional Chinese inheritance, particularly ownership of land and private-property. Modern Chinese communism is enforced by the CCP, whose control of the country is the key to its continuity, and they see it as their duty to keep the conversion going on.

For much of the Chinese population, living standards have improved very substantially and freedom increased, but political controls remain tight and rural areas poor.

Religious Restrictions

The ruling CCP promotes atheism and discourages citizens from practicing religion. The 281 million who belong to the CCP or its affiliated organisations are officially banned from engaging in a broad range of spiritual activities.

Still, the CCP tolerates occasional engagement in cultural customs. For example, it is acceptable to visit temples once in a while. But visiting temples for all important religious days or consulting fortune-tellers can lead to expulsion from the CCP. Nevertheless, some CCP members do identify with a religion or engage in religious practices, though generally at lower rates than non-CCP members.

³¹ _

https://www.pewresearch.org/short-reads/2023/10/23/10-things-to-know-about-chinas-policies-on-religion/sr_23-10-23_china-policies_02.png/

Children under 18 are constitutionally prohibited from having any formal religious affiliation in China. There is also a ban on religious education, including Sunday schools, religious summer camps. Schools focus on promoting non-religion and atheism, and many children join CCP-affiliated youth groups, where they must pledge commitment to atheism.

China is pursuing a policy of “Sinicization” that requires religious groups to align their doctrines, customs and morality with Chinese culture. Adherents are expected to prioritise Chinese traditions and loyalty to the state.

Sinicization takes various forms. Crosses and minarets must look more Chinese. Pastors and imams must reflect socialist values.

China has been accused of restrictive policies towards Muslims – particularly Uyghurs in Xinjiang province – which extend to mass internment, surveillance and torture. Uyghurs make up 43% of Chinese Muslims. China’s government rejects the accusations and says that relocations, camps and other forced measures are meant to improve Muslims’ lives. In Urumqi, the capital of Xinjiang, about 12.5% of the population is Uyghur. However, the city’s population is predominantly Han Chinese (74.9%). Overall in Xinjiang, approximately 45% of the population is Uyghur. While most Uyghurs are Muslim, it’s important to note that not all Muslims in Xinjiang are Uyghurs

Christianity in China is governed by several sets of rules. Christians are allowed to worship in “official churches” registered with supervisory government agencies responsible for Protestantism and Catholicism. However, many Christians refuse this oversight and worship in underground churches. In 2018, the Vatican and China signed an agreement over bishop appointments to help alleviate tensions for China’s Catholics. Since then, the Chinese government has stepped up efforts to bring Catholic churches into the official system.

China treats Han Buddhism more leniently than Christianity or Islam. Xi frequently praises Han Buddhists for having integrated Confucian, Taoist and other traditional Chinese beliefs and practices. At the same time, China has cracked down on Tibetan Buddhists.

Folk religion and ancient spiritual traditions play a large role in China. The government encourages some activities that it considers to be part of China’s cultural heritage. It has even financed the renovation of some temples. People in China are allowed to venerate the Chinese philosopher Confucius.

The Chinese government has tasked local governments with regulating folk religious activities to ensure they reflect cultural heritage and are guided by socialist values. Since 2015, local authorities have been registering temples with historical and cultural importance and making efforts to bring their staff and activity under state supervision.

Religious activity that falls outside of the five officially recognized religions and does not meet the government’s approval as a form of cultural heritage is often categorised by authorities as “superstition” or “evil cult.” Some groups, including Falun Gong, the Unification Church and the Children of God, are. Considered cults and banned.

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Chapter Six

Western Cultural Tradition

Reprise

We are concerned here with examining the religious and philosophical domains to glean whether Man in his further evolution has a pathway Beyond Materiality.

Our quest has led us to focus on what I call the “metaphysical issues”: namely what is the purpose of Man, which in turn devolves very much on whether there is a Supreme Being, and did he create the universe and Man. The prognosis is that if the answer to the latter questions is positive, then it is likely, Man has a pathway to immortality after death. If negative, we have to look for Man’s destiny in materiality.

The review of the main religious domains has reflected common overall features. They crystalise their understandings of the divine in different forms and different order of beings, and define the purpose of Man and prescribe their desirable “way of life” in different ways, and provide their own religious practices by which Man may interact with the above. Out of these emerge their philosophies including the principals of human interaction and societal development. The civilisations reflect their religious heritage with varying emphasis. We have confined ourselves to the major religions.

We have confined ourselves to the “living” religions, and focussed on the following religious traditions

- . (a) The Abrahamic Tradition, which spans the Jewish, Islamic and Bab-Bahai religions
- . (b) The Mithridatic Tradition, which includes the Zoroaster religion
- . (c) The Indian Cultural Heritage or Dharmatic Tradition, which spans the Hindu, Buddhist, Jain and Sikh religions, and
- . (d) The Chinese Cultural Heritage, which includes the Taoism and Confucianism

Our review includes the Chinese cultural transformation on to Marxist-Leninist Communism, (with Chinese characteristics) This provides an insight into an a-theistic alternative evolutionary pathway.

We complete the study with the Western Cultural Tradition, after which we shall conclude with a look at things from the perspective of our modern civilisation, ie our Global Society and beyond..

The Historical Backdrop

Greek Beginnings.

The archaeological record suggests that Western civilisation began with the Minoan Greeks on the island of Crete south of the Aegean Se. They flourished in the Bronze Age (2700–1450 BCE) about the time of the Harappan kingdom in the Indus and the Yellow Emperor.in China.

The Greeks went on to establish Greek civilisation, comprising over 1,500 independent city-states on the surrounding sea coasts, from the Italian peninsula to Anatolia and on both sides of the Mediterranean.

In 336 -322 BCE, Alexander the Great conquered the Persian Empire, extending Greek hegemony across Asia to India. On his death, the Greek empire was divided into the Seleucid Hellenic kingdom in the east, the Ptolemaic Hellenic kingdom in the west, and Greece proper.

Pax Romana

In 762 BCE, Rome was found as a republic, and by 145 BCE had conquered Greece proper. By 63 BCE, Rome had conquered much of Seleucid Hellenic Greece, including Galilee and Judea in Palestine, and the whole of Ptolemaic Greece by 30 BCE.

Two Roman Empires

Imperial Roman reached its maximum extent around 395 under emperor Trajan, extending from Britain to Mesopotamia.

In 476, the empire split into the a western Roman and an eastern Byzantine empire, the later based in Constantinople.

At this time, there were widespread movements of barbarian Germanic tribes, Vandals, Visigoths and Franks, southward from Europe. In 476, the Visigoths finally conquered the western Roman empire.

Rise of Christianity and the European Kingdoms

Jesus Christ was born in and into the Roman empire, in Judea, in BCE 4. He was crucified in 33, founding the Christian religion. By 313, the Roman emperor was converted and the Roman empire adopted Christianity as its official religion by the Edict of Milan. Rome became the headquarters of the new religion.

The Visigoths converted to Christianity, and so began the Christianisation of the European tribes. They were increasingly enculturated by the urbane civilisation of the Romans with high standards of living, and they acquired a sophisticated language (Latin) developed to the highest levels of capability for societal, intellectual as well as religious purposes.

Europe became a sub-continent of Christian kingdoms. In 800, the Pope crowned the (Frankish) Carolinian king, Charlemagne, emperor of the Romans" the first reigning emperor in the west since deposition by the Visigoths. From about 962, this expanded to become the Holy Roman Empire, centred around Germany, Italy and Burgundy, a loose collection of kingdoms recognising the overall leadership of the Pope.

Middle Ages

In what is known as the Middle Ages that followed, the main educated component of society (besides the nobility) was the Christian church. Societal development and scholarship remained tightly aligned to Christian understandings.

Besides pushing themselves into political leadership, the church stanced themselves across intellectual and cultural development. They became over-institutionalised, over-prescriptive, over-affluent, and inevitably less than perfect.

Split of Christianity

Divisions arose between east and west, mainly over the over-lapping of their empires, and also theological disagreements. In the Great Schism of 1054, they executed the formal separation of the Latin church of Rome and the Greek Orthodox church of Constantinople. The latter would continue in history in the east within the Byzantine empire, and we follow it no further here.

Renaissance

While the Germanic peoples struggled to emerge from their feudal world, the Graeco-Roman Europeans carried on with their former civilisation. They travelled, traded and exchanged ideas across the Mediterranean Sea, setting up extensive maritime commerce. They became skilled artisans and craftsman (and consumers) of high quality goods. They became affluent.

They came into contact not only with classical Greece and the historic civilisations of Mesopotamia, but also Roman Palestine (birthplace of Christianity) and the powerful emergent Islamic empire. Alexandria became a pivotal centre of the old and new.

Out of the preceding rose the Renaissance. It was a fervent period of cultural, artistic, political, and scientific "rebirth" following the Middle Ages, generally spanning the period 1300–1700. Originating in Italy, it spread to the other European kingdoms.

At core it was a Humanist movement, a shift from divine-centered medieval thought to a human-centered philosophy focusing on human potential, creativity, and achievements.

It was characterised by groundbreaking mastery in art, and pivotal discoveries in science. The former incorporated realism, emotion, and perspective that would enrich future cultural, intellectual and spiritual life. The latter launched a fresh and practical curiosity about the physical world that would lead to the Scientific Revolution.

The Renaissance witnessed many cardinal inventions such as paper, printing, the mariner's compass and gunpowder. To the scholars and thinkers of the day, it was primarily a time of the revival of Classical learning and wisdom. The Renaissance marked the transition from the Middle Ages to modernity.

The Reformation

The Renaissance generated growing discontent in the Western church among the newer northern Christians with their tradition-bound Roman brethren. It erupted in 1517, when Martin Luther challenged the sale of indulgences and church corruption, leading to the explosion of the Protestant Reformation.

Reformers argued that the Bible, not the Pope or church tradition, was the sole source of divine authority, and that people could have a direct relationship with God without priests. Key leaders included Martin Luther (Lutheranism), John Calvin (Calvinism), and Huldrych Zwingli (the Reformed Church).

The movement was used by many European princes to seize land and power from the Roman church. King Henry VIII of England separated England from Rome, establishing the Church of England in 1534. The term "Catholic" became the name of the Roman church thereafter.

The Reformation resulted in profound conflict, including the Counter-Reformation (or Catholic Reformation), a wave of persecution, and the Thirty Years' War (1618–1648), eventually creating the modern European map of mixed Protestant and Catholic states. It also fuelled the founding of colonies abroad by European emigration.

Global Exploration and Conquest

The Renaissance awakened Europe to the riches and potential of the rest of the world, still largely available for grabs.

Marco Polo, a Venetian-Italian, visited China in 1275, served at the court of Kublai Khan for 17 years and returned home in 1299.

Christopher Columbus, a Genoese-Italian, sailing for the King of Spain, discovered America, (San Salvador island to be precise), in 1492.

Vasco de Gama, a Portuguese, sailing for the King of Portugal, first rounded the Cape of Good Hope in 1497, and reached India (Calicut) in 1498.

Ferdinand Magellan, a Portuguese explorer, sailing for the King of Spain, rounded Terra del Fuego in 1520, and reached the Philippines in 1521, where he died. His Spanish navigator, Juan Sebastian

Elcano returned home in 1522, with one ship out of five originally, completing the first round-the-world journey.

To complete world occupation, we might note that t

- .- the Portuguese conquered Goa in 1510 and Malacca (my home town) in 1511,
- .- the British established their first trading post in Surat, India in 1613
- .-the Dutch conquered the Moluccas in 1623, and
- .-the French established their first trading post in Surat in India in 1668.

Mercantilism, Colonies and Slavery

The driving economic formula was mercantilism, a form of national economics. The underlying principle was, in a free-for-all, for nations to amass as much of the world's wealth as possible, by conquest, occupation and plunder, unfettered by restrictions.

The Spanish immediately proceeded to conquer the central, west and south of the South American continent, while Portugal took Brazil in 1500. The west indies became open hunting grounds for all comers, including the French, the Dutch and the British.

The earliest pursuits of the Spanish in South America were not for colonisation per se but the search for gold and other minerals, exploiting the indigenous peoples, many to extinction. The Portuguese introduced plantation sugar into the empty lands of Brazil in the 1530s, which began the massive demand for slaves. This led to the sugar revolution of the West Indies a century later, with its demand for slaves.

In 1518, the Spanish crown issued a pivotal charter authorising the direct import enslaved Africans to the Spanish Americas. They then issued monopoly contracts to foreign merchants to supply the slaves typically Portuguese and Genoese, but later the Dutch, French, and British. Approximately 4 to 5 million enslaved Africans were imported to South America before abolition, with Brazil receiving the vast majority to work on sugarcane plantations.

Inter-kingdom and internal conflicts, due largely to religious as well as economic inequalities, led to European interest in colonisation. In 1607 the British established the first permanent colony in Virginia, North America. The French founded Quebec in 1608, and Dutch followed in 1624 at New Amsterdam. The first slave arrived in Virginia in 1619, Large-scale slavery however began with the growth of the cotton industry in the next century.

In 1663 and 1672, the British crown issued a royal monopoly charter to the Royal African Company to trade in enslaved Africans, gold, and ivory, which transported more enslaved people to the Americas than any other single entity in history. The King was a shareholder, and the company was allowed to govern plantation areas, declare martial law, and manage the trade. Needless to say, the lucrative field was joined by privateers.

When slavery was abolished in the United States in 1865, there were nearly 4 million enslaved people. Another figure given of the total of enslaved persons who survived the Atlantic passage (presumably both sides of) was 10.7 million.

One result was a vast increase in wealth in the mother countries, though mainly to the elite, with a growing gap in economic and social conditions between the latter and the common folk.

Scientific Revolution

The increasing wealth, albeit it skewered, fostered a higher quality of life all round., with the development of an educated middle-class, a growing intelligentsia and leisured class, a maturing societal environment, and growing needs.

This was spurred in turn by new inventions, such as the telescope and the microscope. Other people began to experiment in labs, discuss in societies and research in higher institutions. The world was ripe for the scientific revolution.

The Scientific Revolution (16th–17th centuries) was a profound shift in European thought that challenged both the Greek philosophies and the Christian metaphysics of the time as the primary views of the universe. Modern science went squarely empirical. Knowledge to be scientific must be based on systematic observation, experimentation, mathematical reasoning, and physical proof. The scientific method became the basis of knowledge. This approach transformed our understanding of the whole of physics, astronomy, biology., indeed the whole universe.

Izaak Newton's Principia Mathematica published in 1687 is generally recognised to be the start of the scientific revolution

Age of Enlightenment

There was a change in the social mind-set called the age of enlightenment. Reason was seen as the primary source of authority, shifting away from tradition and faith, with emphasis on individual liberty, freedom of expression, and natural rights (eg, life, liberty, property).

Thinkers advocated for the separation of powers and questioned the divine right of kings and the influence of the Church, promoted constitutional government and the social contract (ie the idea that government should serve the people and exist by consent)

People questioned everything across the zones of philosophy and metaphysics.

Industrialisation

One of the immediate benefits of science was a conspicuous upgrading of the scale and quality of urban life. There was simultaneously an agricultural revolution that released a flow of labour to the cities. Conditions were ripe to trigger industrialisation

It was the cotton textile industry in Manchester, Britain in 1780s that led the world, with a number of ground-breaking inventions. By the 1880s, Lancashire produced 80% of global cotton piece goods, and by the early 1900s, it still manufactured roughly 65% of the world's cotton.

Britain prospered massively because it was the perfect monopolistic set up. Britain controlled supply and demand. The raw cotton was grown by slaves in the American colonies, while Britain controlled their supply of slaves. Likewise raw cotton was extracted from India at prices suppressed by the British. On the other hand, the massed produced textiles were exported to the colonies at prices fixed by the British. Britain also controlled the shipping, which ships were filled bothways. At its height, the industry consumed over 2.1 billion pounds of raw cotton.

At home, employment conditions were abysmal. Friedrich Engels in 1845 documented them in *The Condition of the Working Class in England* - which later informed Karl Marx's *Das Kapital*: He reported that wages were low with stiff fines. Workers were summarily laid off if there was a down-turn in production, which left them to starve. Employers preferred women and children who were paid less (including 5-6 year olds). The typical working hours were 12-14 per week, often with no meal or rest breaks as workers had to meet the set output rates.

Working conditions were described as "hellish". Mills were extremely loud, causing widespread hearing loss. The air was thick with cotton lint and dust, Dangerous machines were unguarded, Temperatures in spinning mills were kept high and humid to prevent the thread from breaking, creating unbearable working conditions. Workers were packed into overcrowded, damp, and filthy slums.

The shift from independent handloom weaving to factory work meant workers had no control over their labour and no property, becoming entirely dependent on wages (the new proletariat)..

Engels concluded that the industrial system reduced workers to "mere commodities". People were mere factors of production and only employed where there was a net marginal rate of return.

Marx viewed the Manchester textile industry as the quintessential model of the capitalist system, highlighting the exploitation and mechanisation that he predicted would lead to class struggle.

Revolution

American War of Independence

Generally, the colonies were oppressed with taxations and prohibitions of different kinds, and made to pay for wars fought on their behalf against third parties. The first major colonial revolution was the American War of Independence 1775-1776.

French Revolution

On the home front, concern for the welfare of the domestic population was not yet a working principle. Conditions in France were extreme.

The French Revolution (1789-99) convulsed the whole of Europe. The revolution was caused by a combination of factors: (a) after decades of over-spending, the country was bankrupt, (b) under the feudal system (ancient regime) the additional tax burden fell on the Third Estate³², who comprised 90% of the poorest; (c) a series of bad harvests had shot bread prices up and left people starving and desperate.; and (d) there was no way to change things, with a weak king and the people with no political power, sparking rural and urban riots.

At the same time, intellectuals spread ideas about liberty, equality, and fraternity, encouraging people to question the absolute monarchy and the church's power.

The Third Estate finally met in 1789. With one stroke it abolished the ancient regime and set itself up as the National Assembly, which formed the First Republic in 1791. The other major European monarchies³³ (all relatives) reacted to protect the French king and queen, who were nonetheless both beheaded in 1793 during the Reign of Terror (1793-4). The period ended with formation of the Directorate in 1795.

In 1796, Napoleon Bonaparte took command of the republican army forces, and in 1799 overthrew the Directorate, becoming First Consul. The revolution basically ended at that point.

But Napoleon continued a programme of warfare. After continuing victories, he crowned himself Emperor of France in 1804. In the next year he dismantled the Holy Roman empire (Austria) but failed to invade Russia in 1812.

He abdicated in 1814, when the European forces entered Paris, was exiled to Elba, escaped, and was finally defeated at the Battle of Waterloo by Wellington. Altogether, the monarchies fought six "Wars of Coalition" against Napoleon, excluding Waterloo

Napoleon Bonaparte introduced comprehensive reforms that solidified revolutionary gains, stabilised France, and modernised Europe.

Key reforms included the Napoleonic Code (1804), creation of the Bank of France, stabilised currency, modernised tax collection, and abolition of corrupt guilds; educational changes (established lycées); dividing France into departments managed by central government-appointed prefects; the 1801 Concordat which reconciled the French state with the Catholic Church, while abolishing feudalism and serfdom in conquered territories; and the introduction of a metric-decimal system of weights and measures. He built new harbours, canals, highways, and improved public sanitation.

The political changes after Napoleon were too complicated to relate. Suffice it to say there were two Bourbon restorations, another monarchy, a Second Revolution (1848), a Second Empire (with Napoleon III), and finally things stabilised in the Third Republic in 1870.

³² - Under the French Ancient Regime, the people were divided into the First Estate (clergy), Second Estate (aristocracy) and the Third Estate (plebians – everybody else) who constituted 90%. The first two were granted many tax exemptions

³³ - Austria (Holy Roman Empire), Prussia, Britain, Spain, Burgundy, Italy, and Russia, in various "coalitions"

Reforms

The French introduced limited general elections in 1789. The new wealthy, educated, but politically excluded members of the Third Estate (the bourgeoisie) wanted a greater say in government, influenced by the Enlightenment and the American Revolution. The French finally introduced universal suffrage for men in 1848. The British followed in 1802, and uniform presidential elections were introduced in the United States in 1845..

Slavery was first abolished in France in 1794 (and finally in 1848). It was abolished in many south American countries in 1810-30s, in Britain in 1833, the United States in 1865 and in Brazil in 1888

Modern compulsory education was introduced in Germany (Prussia) in 1763, and in most of Europe by 1872.

Interestingly, minimum provision for working conditions were slow in taking shape, and not formalised until the early 20th century.

The franchise for women was also slow, the first country to introduce it being New Zealand in 1893, with Britain in 1922, and France in 1945.

The Spanish South American colonies fought for and achieved their independence between 1811 and 1828, while Brazil was given it 1822. The British Raj was installed in India, promising its new citizens full rights of British Subjects.

The Christian churches saw a resurgence following the French revolution. Besides re-alignment of focus towards societal objectives, and catering to the needs of the workers and the poor, they established orders, missions, societies and charities to meet the needs of colonial peoples.

A major European development was the unification of the 39 German principalities into a single Germany under Bismarck in 1871.

A few years before Karl Marx published *Das Kapital* (Capital: A Critique of Political Economy) in 1867. Culminating the century, Leo XIII issued the *Rerum Novarum*, the landmark encyclical that addressed the condition of the working class.

Early 20th Century

The world that sailed into the new century was a patchwork of new and old empires with their colonies and satellite territories, as well independent countries, covering most of the globe, including an industrialising Japan and a huge newly emergent and still weak China, all operating within an open capitalist market economy. The spirit of mercantilism continued to operate, with countries strangling each other for resources, territory and markets.

The First World War (1914–1918) was caused by a combination of long-term tensions. A complex web of treaties divided Europe into two main camps: the Triple Entente (France, Britain, Russia) and the Triple Alliance (Germany, Austria-Hungary, Italy). These pacts meant a localised conflict that could trigger a general European war. Nationalism and self-determination created severe tensions. In the Balkans ("the powder keg of Europe"), a Slavic nationalist finally assassinated the Austro-Hungarian heir to the throne. The latter declared war on Serbia, activating the alliance system. Germany's "blank check" support for Austria-Hungary, Russia's mobilisation to support Serbia, and subsequent declarations of war between Germany, Russia, France, and Britain turned the crisis into a world war. Some 16 million lives were lost.

The Bolshevik Revolution, led by Vladimir Lenin in October 1917, was a pivotal insurrection that emerged from the chaos of First World War, its food shortages and failed reforms. The Bolsheviks seized power, abolished the monarchy and formed the first communist state in the world, paving the way for the formation of the USSR in 1922.

Benito Mussolini founded the fascist movement in 1919 which later transformed into the National Fascist Party (PNF) of Italy in 1921, to unite nationalist and anti-socialist forces. As Prime Minister, by 1925, Mussolini had dismantled democratic institutions and assumed dictatorial powers as Il Duce. Fascism was a far-right, authoritarian, and ultranationalist political ideology characterised by forcible suppression of opposition, and the subordination of individual interests to the nation. It promoted a myth of national rebirth, using militarism and violent extremism to target perceived enemies.

In Oct 1929, the world's capitalist economy collapsed in the Great Crash of the stock-market, leading to a global Great Depression, that did not recover until 1954.

Nazism, or National Socialism (NS), was the far-right, totalitarian ideology of Adolf Hitler and the Nazi Party (NSDAP) in Germany. It was rooted in the nineteenth-century German racialist (*völkisch*) movement, emerging in the context of Germany's defeat in WW1 as the counter-revolutionary movement in conjunction with the rise of fascism in Europe.

.It combined extreme nationalism, virulent antisemitism, and pseudo-scientific racism, defining a "master race" (Aryans) and promoting the systematic persecution and extermination of Jews and other minorities.

Hitler joined a newly-formed German Workers' Party (DAP) in 1920, which party changed its name to the National Socialist German Workers' Party (NSDAP or Nazi Party) in 1921. Adolf Hitler became the leader (chairman) of the Nazi Party, assuming dictatorial control over it.

Hitler served nine months' imprisonment in 1923-1924, following his failed Beer Hall Putsch. He used the period to dictate his book, *Mein Kampf*, outlining the ideology of Nazism. It detailed his plans for German expansion and racial policy, promoted radical antisemitism, the superiority of the "Aryan" race, and the need for *Lebensraum* (living space) in Eastern Europe,

The party won a majority of seats in the 1933 general elections, and Hitler was appointed Chancellor (Prime Minister). When the incumbent president died, he assumed the title of Führer (Leader and Chancellor). And proceeded to turn Germany into a dictatorship, confirmed by a plebiscite in 1934.

Under Hitler's leadership from 1933 to 1945, the regime sought to create a racial state, culminating in the Holocaust and the destruction of World War II.

General Francisco Franco emerged as the leader of the Nationalist forces during the Spanish Civil War. In 1937, He integrated fascism into his authoritarian regime, heavily influenced by Nazi Germany and Italy, although it was largely a conservative military dictatorship in practice. Franco later distanced his regime from blatant fascism, shifting to traditional National Catholicism.

Second World War

A highly militarised Germany launched the Second World War on 1 Sep 1939, when they invaded Poland. Before that, Germany had expanded its territory through a series of occupations and annexations, starting with the Rhineland (1936), and Austria (1938) and Czechoslovakia (1938-9). These actions were part of the Nazi expansionist plan to acquire *Lebensraum* (living space).

Nazi Germany invaded France (and the Low Countries) on 10 May 1940, and invaded Russia on 22 Jun 1941. Germany, Italy and Japan signed their alliance in June 1940, forming the Axis powers. The Allies comprised France, Britain and members of the British Empire, Russia and China. When Japan bombed Pearl Harbour on 7 Dec 1941, the United States joined the Allies.

The tide turned, for they fought on both the European and the Pacific fronts. The war ended in Europe on 10 May 1945 when the Allies entered Berlin, and in Japan on 5 Aug 1945 with the atomic bombs dropped on Hiroshima and Nagasaki.

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Post Second World War – Global Unification

In Europe, the Russians occupied the whole of Eastern Europe, with the dividing line right through

Germany. This created an Eastern European bloc allied to the USSR or “Soviet Communist bloc”, and a Western European bloc of countries who became members of the “Democratic Free World” – which included the rest of the world. In 1949, following a Communist revolution, China joined the Communist bloc. This began a Cold War between the blocs, with the major powers aiming nuclear missiles at each other until 1991, when the USSR was dismantled into 15 independent states.

Today, there are 10 countries with nuclear arms. They are the original major powers of the United States, (now) Russia, Britain and France with China alongside, and North Korea, India and Pakistan with reportedly Israel, and Iran developing the same. There has not (yet) been a Third World War, but presently

The most important development of the century, indeed the most important event in the evolutionary of Man was the adoption by the General Assembly of the United Nations on 10 Dec 1948 of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights (UDHR). Through this monumental resolution, all the peoples of this world, for the first time, expressed their identity and unity as one human race, beginning with the words in Article 1 “All human beings are born free and equal in dignity and rights. They are endowed with reason and conscience and should act towards one another in a spirit of brotherhood.” The Preamble states further that the “recognition of the inherent dignity and of the equal and inalienable rights of all members of the human family is the foundation of freedom, justice and peace in the world, The Declaration enabled humans on this planet to establish, adopt and practise commonly agreed principles applicable to all, and collaborate together in all necessary spheres.

Man has not eliminated wars, conflicts, and other forms of non-compliance as a result. The UN structure itself is lopsided, reflecting immediate postwar veto power positions. Further it lacks enforcement authority within countries, even internationally. But, largely through goodwill, its co-ordinative and collaborative frameworks and its technical and financial assistance agencies the world has streaked ahead with development. We might call this unification the culmination of his growth to maturity and the conclusion of his first Turning Point

As a result, the Western Cultural Tradition successfully evolved the commonly platform for the further evolution of mankind. It is a convenient point to conclude our review of the historical antecedents of Western heritage, and proceed with the latter

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Greco-Roman World

The modern day tradition of philosophy emerged from Greco-Roman civilisation.

Archaeological and other evidence indicate that the Greco-Roman civilisation took shape in the Bronze age with the Minoans, the first European civilisation (3100 to 1100 BCE), on the island of Crete. At the heart of Minoan religion was the Great Mother Goddess, known also as Astarte, Ishtar, Cybele, etc. Traces of Minoan concepts are found in Greece but little of their pantheon or religion survived. There is no sign of any philosophy.

The Greco-Roman world is said to have started as the Mycenaean civilisation (1750 to 1050 BCE) which developed around Thebes (Athens) on mainland Greece and in the neighbouring islands. The Greek pantheon was inherited from them.

Following the Dark Age (1200 to 800 BCE), the Greco-Roman world evolved through their Archaic age (800 to 450 BCE) and reached their peak in their Classical age (510 to 323 BCE). At their maximum extent Greece comprised over 1,500 settlements all over the Aegean and the Mediterranean, in the form of city-states under the loose hegemony of one or other of the mainland states. They were variously invaded by Persia, mainly from 492 to 490 BCE, and finally conquered by Alexander the Great (of Macedonia) in 336 BCE. Greece became thereafter part of Hellenic Greece until occupied by Rome in 31 BCE and finally conquered by the latter in 146 BCE.

Homer's Iliad and Odyssey were epic poems written between 850 to 650 BCE, in the Archaic age. He wrote about events during and after the Trojan War (1194 to 1184 BCE) between King Agamemnon, brother of Menelaus, of Mycenae and Paris, King of Troy, who abducted Helen, the daughter of the

former. The epics are replete with actions and involvements by the Greek pantheon of gods. By the Classical age, the Greek gods were fully institutionalised culturally, but receded religiously. Greek societal development proceeded along civic, economic, artistic and intellectual lines, without religious elements as such except as cultural features. Special gods were however invoked and worshipped in dedicated temples, etc. Philosophy in the modern day sense was born in this environment.

Greek Pioneers

As a society, the Greeks valued a reflective life. Philosophy emerged when the Greek took to developing their rational capacities. Knowledge became a central pursuit. Philosophy was an expression of their love of wisdom as well as an exercise in well-being,

The pursuit of knowledge in turn led them to understand man and the physical universe - through philosophic enquiry and scientific investigation. In this sense, philosophy is sometimes described as "the midwife of the sciences".

The first known philosophers of Greece were the pre-Socratics, who attempted to provide naturalistic, non-mythical descriptions of the world. They were followed by Socrates, one of the first philosophers based in Athens during the Classical age (their golden age). Although he left nothing written, and is known by second-hand accounts of disciples, he laid down the basis of modern philosophy. Socrates' disciple Plato, who wrote *The Republic*, established a radical difference between ideas and the concrete world, and it was Plato's disciple, Aristotle, who distinguished philosophy and the sciences, and wrote extensively about both, nature and ethics. They were followed by Pythagoras into the Hellenic era, spawning variations such as cynicism, stoicism, epicureanism, and neo-platonism, which became fashionable during the Roman era,

Pre-Socratics

The first known philosophers of Greece were the pre-Socratics. Their story represents a major transition of man from myth to the use of reason. They attempted to provide naturalistic, non-mythical descriptions of the world. We spend a little time with them.

Pre-Socratic philosophers were mostly interested in cosmology, i.e. the beginning and substance of the universe, but their inquiries spanned the natural world as well as human nature. They sought explanations based on natural law rather than the actions of the gods. Their work and writing has been almost entirely lost. Knowledge of their views comes from *testimonia*, i.e. later authors' discussions of the work of pre-Socratics.

They predominated in the period 600 to 400 BCE. The pre-Socratics arose from a world dominated by myths, sacred places, and local deities. Their direct inheritance was the world reflected in the epics of Homer and Hesiod. They initially centred around the island of Ionia, whose capital was Miletus, a main crossroads of the surrounding empires. Greek popular religion contained many features of the religions of neighbouring civilisations, such as the Egyptians, Mesopotamians, and Hittites.

The democratic political system of independent city-states (*poleis*) contributed to the rise of philosophy. Most Greek towns were not ruled by autocrats or priests, allowing citizens to question freely a wide range of issues. Various *poleis* flourished and became wealthy, especially Miletus.

The most important feature of pre-Socratic philosophy was the use of reason to explain the universe. Many sought the material principle (*arche*) of things. They emphasised the rational unity of things and rejected supernatural explanations, seeking natural principles at work in the world and human society.

The pre-Socratics were not atheists. However, they minimised the extent of the gods' involvement in natural phenomena such as thunder or totally eliminated the gods from the natural world

The pre-Socratic phase itself is divided into three phases. The first phase of pre-Socratic philosophers, mainly the Milesians, Xenophanes, and Heraclitus rejected traditional cosmogony and attempted to explain nature based on empirical observations and interpretations. A second phase,

that of the Eleatics, thought that only one substance existed and formed Kosmos. In the third phase, the post-Eleatics opposed most Eleatic teaching and returned to the naturalism of the Milesians

First Philosopher -Thales

Little is known of the first philosopher, Thales of Miletus, (625 to 548 BCE). He may have been Greek or Phoenician. He is thought to have travelled to Egypt and Babylon, or at least was influenced by them.

Thales' view was that all of nature was based on the existence of a single ultimate substance, which he theorised to be water. He was widely influential among the philosophers of his time.

Thales thought the earth must be a flat disk or mound of land and dirt floating in an expanse of water. It seems likely that Thales viewed the land as coming from the water on which it floated and the oceans that surrounded it.

Thales was known for introducing the theoretical and practical use of geometry to Greece, making him the West's "first mathematician".

Thales was also a noted astronomer, acknowledged in antiquity for describing the position of Ursa Minor. He calculated the duration of the year and the timings of the equinoxes and the solstices – years before it was found that the earth was round.

First Moral Philosopher - Socrates

Socrates (470 – 399 BCE), an ancient Greek philosopher, is generally credited as the founder of Western or modern philosophy, and as among the first moral philosophers of the ethical tradition. Socrates authored no texts and is known mainly through the posthumous accounts particularly of his students Plato and Xenophon. These accounts are written in the style of question and answer or "Socratic dialogue". In 399 BCE, he was accused of impiety and corrupting the youth and he was sentenced to death.

Socrates taught that people should live virtuous lives by caring for their souls and seeking to understand the nature of virtue and justice. He believed that people should care more about their souls than their bodies and possessions. His quest for truth and wisdom was greatly influential during his time and continues to be so.

His key ideas are easily grasped³⁴

- . **1 Self-knowledge** : People must first admit to their ignorance and realise that there is a world of knowledge to be accessed.
- . **2 Critical thinking** : People should ask questions, think critically, and come to their own conclusions.
- . **3 Virtue** : Virtue is a form of knowledge and the most important human obligation.
- . **4 Care of the soul** : The cultivation of virtue is the most important human obligation.
- . **5 False beliefs** : People should correct their false beliefs.

Socrates' main focus was on how to live a good and virtuous life. Socrates believed that no one does wrong voluntarily. Evil is the result of ignorance. If people knew what was the right thing to do they would do it. We always choose what we think is the best or good for us. Socrates is considered the father of modern education.

Platonism

Plato (c. 428–347 BCE) was born in Athens and founded the Academy, the first institution of higher learning in the Western world. As a devoted student of Socrates and teacher of Aristotle, his revolutionary ideas on ethics, politics, and metaphysics shaped the foundations of Western thought.

³⁴ - https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Pre-Socratic_philosophy

Plato wrote primarily in the form of philosophical dialogues—conversations between characters (often featuring Socrates) designed to probe deep truths. Plato's intellectual and historical impact can be understood through a few core pillars.

. **The Theory of Forms:** This is Plato's central metaphysical concept. He argued that the physical world we see is only a shadow or reflection of a higher, perfect, and unchanging reality made up of "Forms" or "Ideas" (eg, perfect Justice, Beauty, and Truth). and

. **The Republic** : His most famous masterpiece. It outlines his vision for a just society, famously arguing that the ideal civilisation should be ruled by philosopher-kings who possess a true understanding of the Good

After the transition from myths to natural explanations, the second major transition was from natural evidence to abstraction. In Plato the physical world is examined to reveal the next higher common levels of their makeup, indeed opening the door to the metaphysics of the universe.

At the most fundamental level, Platonism affirms the existence of abstract objects which are asserted to exist in a third realm distinct from both the sensible external world and from the internal world of consciousness. This applies to all phenomena, objects, numbers and sets of values.

Plato's Theory of Forms is a major concept that the physical world is not as real or true as Forms. According to this theory, Forms—commonly translated as Ideas—are the non-physical, timeless, absolute, and unchangeable essences of all things, which objects and matter in the physical world merely imitate, resemble, or participate in. Plato sometimes suggests that these Forms are the only objects of study that can provide knowledge.

The Form of the Good, or more literally translated "the Idea of the Good" is a concept in which Forms are defined as perfect, eternal, and changeless ,concepts existing outside space and time. The Form of the Good is the mysterious highest Form and the source of all the other Forms.

The central concept of Platonism is the distinction between the reality which is perceptible but unintelligible, and studied by the likes of physical science and the reality which is imperceptible but intelligible, associated with the unchanging being and studied by the likes of mathematics

The Aristotelian Tradition

Aristotle (384–322 BCE) founded the Aristotelian tradition, which influenced Western philosophy and the development of modern science. His work covered many subjects, including logic, metaphysics, ethics, and natural science. He was the first scientist.

.1 **Logic** Aristotle is considered the founder of logic. His work Organon was a traditional manual of logic that included Categories, On Interpretation, Prior Analytics, Posterior Analytics, Sophistical Refutations, and Topics.

. 2 **Metaphysics** Aristotle's Metaphysics is a compilation of texts that cover topics such as substance theory, causation, form and matter, and the existence of mathematical objects.

.3 **Natural science** Aristotle established methods for investigation and reasoning in natural philosophy, which later became natural science. He also developed the theory of epigenesis, which states that an organism develops gradually from undifferentiated material.

Aristotle (384–322 BCE)

He was born in the city of Stagira, northern Greece during the Classical period. At around eighteen years old, he joined Plato's Academy in Athens and remained there until the age of thirty seven (c. 347 BCE). Shortly after Plato died, at the request of Phillip II of Macedonia, he moved to Pella and tutored his son, Alexander the Great, beginning in 343 BC.

In 325 BCE Aristotle founded his Lyceum, in a grove sacred to Apollo. Owing to his habit of walking about the grove while lecturing his students, the school and its students acquired the label of

Peripatetics. He established a library in the Lyceum, which helped in time to produce and preserve many of hundreds of books

Aristotle provided a complex synthesis of the various philosophies existing prior to him. His teachings and methods of inquiry have had a significant impact across the world, and remain a subject of contemporary philosophical discussion.

Aristotle's Main Contribution was inventing the scientific method of analysis, which can be applied to multiple fields of study. He is also responsible for breaking fields of knowledge into categories and subcategories, such as psychology, biology, politics, logic, chemistry, and botany. Aristotle's teachings include ethics, politics, education, and metaphysics.

Metaphysics

.(a) The primacy of the individual. Aristotle believed that the individual is primary in the realm of existence.

.(b) The source of all beings Aristotle believed that there must be a separate and unchanging being that is the source of all other being

Ethics

.(a) Virtue ethics People should develop a virtuous character to achieve happiness and well-being.

.(b) Practical wisdom People should develop practical wisdom through temperance, courage, and justice.

.(c) Eudaimonia People could achieve eudaimonia, a state of happiness or blessedness, by becoming excellent.

Politics

(a) Good governance : Good governance and active citizenship create conditions for people to develop virtues and live fulfilling lives.

, (b) Rulers' duties : Aristotle taught about the duties of rulers and the art of government.

Education

. (a) Develop the mind and character Education should cultivate both the mind and the character.

. © Prepare for life in society Education should prepare individuals for life within their community.

Science

Aristotle (384-322 BCE) was the first to establish scientific enquiry . He made many contributions to science, including:

. (a) Scientific method He established methods for observation and reasoning, which is considered the foundation of the scientific method.

. (b) Classification He categorised and subcategorised fields of knowledge, including biology, chemistry, and psychology.

. © Embryology He theorised that organisms develop gradually from undifferentiated material, a process called epigenesis. He famously described how a chick grows inside an egg.

. (d) Elements He identified the four elements of earth, water, air, and fire, and related them to physical qualities like hotness, coldness, wetness, and dryness.

. € Formal logic He invented the field of formal logic, which was the standard system of logic until the 19th century.

. (f) Zoology He made observational and theoretical contributions to zoology, which were not surpassed until the 19th century.

.(g) Physics He wrote about physics, including topics like motion, the four causes, and optics.

. (h) Natural history He wrote about natural history and science.

Aristotle's views profoundly shaped medieval scholarship. The influence of his physical science extended into the Renaissance and was not replaced systematically until the Enlightenment. He

influenced Judeo-Islamic philosophies during the Middle Ages, and Christian theology especially the Neoplatonism and the Scholastic tradition.

His influence on logic continued well into the 19th century. In addition, his ethics, although always influential, has gained renewed interest with the modern advent of virtue ethics.

Aristotle's work influenced many cultures, including the Arabic, Armenian, Syrian, and Latin traditions. His ideas were taught in universities in Europe, and were also influential in the English, Spanish, and Portuguese colonies.

Pythagoras

Pythagoras (570 to 490 BCE) was born on the island of Samos and died at Metapontium, in modern-day Italy. He was historically pre-Socratic. But his influence ran parallel and beyond the preceding into Hellenic Greece and Roman times, even today.

Pythagoras' teachings emphasised the immortality of the soul and reincarnation. Pythagoras created a cult-like following that advocated that the universe was made up of numbers

Pythagoras influenced the development of philosophy in many ways, including:

- . **(a) The nature of reality** Pythagoras believed that reality was mathematical in nature, and that numbers explained the universe.
- . **(b) The soul** He believed in the immortality and reincarnation of the soul.
- . **© The cosmos** He believed that the cosmos was structured by moral principles and numerical relationships. He is credited with being the first to believe that the Earth was a sphere.
- . **(d) Music** He believed that stars produced sound because they were large and moved quickly. This idea is known as the "Music of the Spheres".
- . **€ Mathematics** He is best known for the Pythagorean theorem, which states that the square of the hypotenuse of a right triangle equals the sum of the squares of the other two sides.
- . **(f) The Pythagorean way of life** He founded a strict way of life that emphasised dietary restrictions, religious ritual, and self-discipline.
- . **(g) The importance of virtue** He taught that people should be virtuous and humane towards all living things.

Pythagoras' ideas influenced the development of Pythagoreanism, a philosophical school and religious brotherhood.

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Hellenic Greece-Roman Times

Many of the Socratic schools founded prior to the Hellenistic period continued to exert influence well into it and were taken up by pre-Christian Rome.

Cynicism advocated purposefully living an ascetic life with only bare necessities in accordance with nature, rejecting all "unnatural pleasures" that were associated with society or its material benefits.

Stoicism believed that the practice of virtue was enough to achieve a well-lived life. The Stoics identified the path with a life spent practicing the four cardinal virtues, namely prudence, fortitude, temperance and justice. Stoic doctrine includes disbelief in non-material existence. It was founded by Zeno of Citium. around 300 BCE.

Epicureans emphasised that pleasure was the highest good. It was achieved through moderation, simplicity, and friendship, the complete absence of mental, emotional, and physical distress or need. The pleasure of the mind was greater than that of the body. A form of **hedonism**, but different in that it emphasised the absence of pain and fear

Editorial Note:

From hereon, all dates are Common Era (CE) or Anno Domino (AD), unless specifically stated otherwise to be Before Common Era (BCE).

Neoplatonism

Neoplatonism taught that there was a supreme, totally transcendent "One", containing no division, multiplicity, nor distinction; likewise, it was beyond all categories of being and non-being. The concept of "being" was derived from the objects of human experience and is an attribute of such objects, but the infinite, transcendent One was beyond all such objects and, therefore, is beyond the concepts which we can derive from them. The One "cannot be any existing thing" and cannot be merely the sum of all such things but "is prior to all existence".

The founder is generally thought to be **Plotinus** (205 – 270) a Greek raised in Roman Egypt. Plotinus was not a Christian, but he was a Platonist philosopher who was influenced by Christianity.

- . He was aware of early Christian doctrines, but he did not pay much attention to them. Plotinus was a third-century Platonist philosopher who never mentioned Christianity in his works.
- . He wrote a treatise called *Against the Gnostics*, which implicitly included opponents who were too early to be considered Christian heretics.
- . Plotinus' successor, Porphyry, wrote a treatise called *Against the Christians*.
- . Plotinus' metaphysics of emanation, which describes the transcendence of the One, is similar to the Christian notion of Creation.
- . Plotinus used analogies to describe the One, such as the sun and a mirror, which are similar to Christian ideas.

Neoplatonism, the philosophy of Plotinus, influenced Christian theology in the East and sometimes in the West. Augustine of Hippo was influenced by Plotinus and Porphyry.

His metaphysical writings later inspired numerous Jewish, Christian, Islamic, and pagan metaphysicians and mystics over the centuries.

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Medieval Philosophy

The medieval period started in the 5th century (CE). Its focus was on religious topics and many thinkers used ancient philosophy to explain and further elaborate Christian doctrines. It was in the medieval period that interest in religious matters became central in the work of philosophers.

Augustine

Augustine of Hippo (364-450) taught a wide range of philosophical ideas, including the nature of God, the human soul, and the relationship between faith and reason. His ideas influenced medieval and modern Christian thought.

Augustine was the most significant Christian thinker after St. Paul. Like most ancient philosophers, Augustine thought that the human being is a compound of body and soul and that, within this compound, the soul—conceived as both the life-giving element and the center of consciousness, perception and thought—is, or ought to be, the ruling part.

. (a) **God and the human soul**

He believed that God's eternal plan for the world, or "eternal law", is inscribed in the human soul as "natural law". He argued that humans can apprehend universal truths that are superior to the human mind itself. He believed that humans are incapable of redeeming themselves by their own efforts, and that only God's grace makes it possible to obey the moral law.

. (b) **History and the will of God**

Augustine viewed history as the outworking of God's will and providence. He believed that humans should study, discern, praise, and submit to God's eternal designs.

. © Ethics and morality

Augustine believed that humans must grow in virtue, knowledge, and love by submitting to God's charity. He believed that love of God and neighbour is more important than reward and punishment in the afterlife.

. (d) Other ideas

Augustine also contributed to the theory of knowledge and language, the conception of evil and freedom, and the doctrine of creation and time.

The Scholastics

The Scholastics were medieval Christian scholars who taught philosophy in universities from about 1100 to 1700.

Scholasticism was initially a programme conducted by medieval Christian thinkers attempting to harmonise the various authorities of their own tradition, and to reconcile Christian theology with classical and late antique philosophy, especially that of Aristotle and Neoplatonism.

Scholasticism significantly went on to develop our understanding of logic. It became foundational to university education which sought to connect a multiplicity of disciplines together as part of one whole.

The Scholastics believed in empiricism and supporting Roman Catholic doctrines through secular study, reason, and logic. It is known for employing logically precise analyses and reconciling classical philosophy and Catholic Christianity.

They applied their method to theology, classical philosophy, and other fields of study. They developed the earliest European medieval universities. They laid the foundation for the development of modern science and philosophy in the Western world.

Thomas Aquinas

Aquinas's masterwork, *Summa Theologica* (1265–1274), is considered to be the pinnacle of scholastic, medieval, and Christian philosophy.

Thomas of Aquino (1225 –1274) was an Italian Dominican friar and priest. He was from the county of Aquino in Sicily.

Thomas was a proponent of natural theology and the father of a school of thought (encompassing both theology and philosophy) known as Thomism.

Central to his thought was the doctrine of natural law, which he argued was accessible to human reason and grounded in the very nature of human beings, providing a basis for understanding individual rights and moral duties. He argued that God is the source of the light of natural reason and the light of faith. He attempted to synthesise Aristotelian philosophy with the principles of Christianity.

Thomas Aquinas' philosophy focused on the balance of reason and faith, and the relationship between science and theology. He believed that humans are naturally good and have a tendency towards good acts.

. (a) **Natural law** Aquinas' most extensive work was on natural law, which he believed was accessible to human reason. He believed that natural law provides a basis for understanding moral duties and individual rights.

. (b) **Law** Aquinas defined law as "an ordinance of reason for the common good". He believed that law should be based on reason, not just the will of the legislator.

. © **God's existence** Aquinas believed that natural reason could prove the existence of God. He famously argued that God exists through five ways, known as the **Quine viæ**.

. **(d) Self-knowledge** Aquinas believed that humans have self-knowledge, meaning that the mind knows itself by reflecting on its actions.

. **€ Other ideas** Humans do **not** have a natural tendency towards evil or sinful acts. Practical reason is the ability to think about how things are and make reasonable judgments about what to do. Faith and reason, and science and theology, can co-exist.

Aquinas believed that natural reason can demonstratively prove God's existence. The first step is to show that, for everything in the changeable world around us, there is a first cause, or prime mover, by virtue of which all other things have their existence, their motion, their qualities and direction.

Quinque Viæ

A Latin phrase that means "Five Ways". It refers to five arguments for the existence of God that were put forward by Thomas Aquinas in his book *Summa Theologica*.

Motion: Everything that moves is moved by something else. There must be a first, unmoved "Prime Mover".

Efficient Cause: Everything has a cause, and nothing can be the cause of itself. There must be a first, uncaused "First Cause".

Contingency: Everything in the universe can either exist or not exist (contingent). There must be at least one necessary being that must exist.

Degree: There are varying degrees of perfection, goodness, and truth. These variations imply a maximum or ultimate standard of perfection.

Teleology (Design): Natural bodies act towards an end or purpose, even without intelligence. They must be directed by an intelligent being, often called the "Grand Designer"

Aquinas used these arguments to prove the existence of God from the effects of His Being that are known to us. Each of the five ways is a reflection on the conditions which must have been in place for the universe to come about.

Good and Evil

Aquinas famously defined evil as the "privation of a due good" (privatio boni). He did not view evil as a physical substance, a tangible force, or an entity created by God.

Evil as an absence, not a presence: Just as darkness is simply the absence of light, evil is the absence of a good that should naturally be present in a thing.

The concept of "Due Good": Evil is not just any missing trait, but the lack of a perfection that belongs to a thing's nature. For instance, blindness is an evil in a human because sight is naturally "due" to human beings. It is not evil for a human to lack the wings of a bird, as wings are not due to human nature.

Aquinas argued that because existence itself is a form of goodness, anything that exists must have some goodness. If something were entirely devoid of good, it would cease to exist entirely.

Moral evil is the absence of moral virtue or right order in a person's will, leading to wrongful actions (sin).

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Transition To Modern Philosophy

The Renaissance period started in the 14th century (CE) and saw a renewed interest in schools of ancient philosophy, in particular Platonism.

The modern period started in the 17th century. One of its central concerns was how philosophical and scientific knowledge were created. Specific importance was given to the role of reason, and sensory experience. Many of these innovations were used in the Enlightenment movement to challenge traditional authorities.

Several attempts to develop comprehensive systems of philosophy were made in the 19th century, for instance, by German idealism and dialectic materialism.

Influential developments in 20th-century philosophy were the emergence and application of formal logic, the focus on the role of language, as well as pragmatism and movements in continental philosophy like phenomenology, existentialism and post-structuralism.

Renaissance

The philosophy of the Renaissance was Humanism. It was not so much a wisdom as an attitude of mind. Humanism focused not on what it was to be human. It was characterised by freedom of thought and expression, and by both human and geographical exploration.

The sciences led with Copernicus finding that the earth was round. Literature broke frontiers with Plutarch and Dante, and art reached supreme heights with Michelangelo and Leonardo di Vinci.

Christianity was marked by breakaways from the monolithic Catholic Church. Most Renaissance humanists were Christians who believed in God and sought to renew Christianity. They believed in returning to the Gospels, the New Testament, and the Church Fathers. Religion became less institutionalised, more personal and more secular. They were concerned with "purifying and renewing Christianity". At the same time, a large portion of Renaissance art depicted scenes from the Bible or was commissioned by the church.

The Renaissance saw the birth of nation states, and their exploration of the newly discovered round world. It led to the development of political science, which abandoned the moralistic approach of how a ruler should behave. Niccolò Machiavelli, who wrote *The Prince*, typified the uncompromising pragmatism of societal development of the times.

The Renaissance saw the growth of literacy and the intelligentsia, universities and libraries, and the general level of intellectual life. This was engaged across the whole cultural front. Philosophy did not specifically output a body of thought as such. The direction of discovery was what Man was, not whether a Supreme Being existed.

Enlightenment

After the passionate explorations of the human being, the new-found world, and the amplified perimeters of religion that characterised the Renaissance, the world began to focus on how he and the physical realities of the world functioned. This laid the ground-work for the next stages in the Scientific age, when man began seriously to change his environment and societal

The Age of Enlightenment (also known as the Age of Reason) was an intellectual philosophical movement that took place in Europe from the late 17th century to the early 19th century.

The Enlightenment placed emphasis on knowledge gained through reason and observation – as against or not exclusively speculation and deduction. Its interest spanned over all the emerging aspects and dimensions of human life: facultative and societal. These ranged from the natural law to mental perception of external reality, to liberty, forms of government, the separation of the church and the state, and ideas and nature of a Supreme Being.

The Enlightenment was preceded by, inspired by and overlapped the Scientific revolution, which included the work of Kepler, Galileo, Huygens, and Isaac Newton.

How much of Renaissance intellectual history is part of modern philosophy is disputed: Later, by the 17th and 18th centuries, the major figures were roughly divided into two main groups.

The “Rationalists”, mostly in France and Germany, argued all knowledge must begin from certain “innate ideas” in the mind. Major rationalists were Descartes, Spinoza, and Leibnitz.

The “Empiricists” by contrast, held that knowledge must begin with sensory experience. Major figures in this line of thought were John Locke and David Hume.

Ethics and political philosophy were usually not subsumed under these categories. Political philosophers including Thomas Hobbes and Jean-Jacques Rousseau, sought to define the rights of the individual and parameters of societal development..

The key features of the Enlightenment included:

- . **(a) Reason** : The primary source of authority and legitimacy
- . **(b) Liberty, equality, and individual rights** : Fundamental operatives of societal development.
- . **© Separation of church and state** : A cardinal turning point in social development, enabling both the religious and the civic to develop independently.
- . **(d) Science** : Established science as a source of knowledge. Experiments and observation were the basis of empirical knowledge
- . **€ Progress** : The belief that human history was a record of progress.

Enlightenment laid the foundation of human rights as the basis for modern societal development. In time, it gave us modern schooling, medicine, republics, and representative democracy

The Enlightenment also triggered revolutionary developments in art, philosophy, and politics. Major ideas included reason, individualism, and scepticism. The French philosopher Voltaire espoused all three of these values.

Baruch (Benedict) Spinoza

Baruch (Benedict) Spinoza (1632 –1677), was a radical 17th-century Dutch philosopher whose ideas challenged religious dogma and laid the foundations for the Enlightenment. His groundbreaking metaphysical and ethical framework fundamentally equated God with nature.

Core Philosophical Ideas

- .- **Pantheistic Monism (God = Nature)**: Spinoza rejected the idea of an anthropomorphic, supernatural, or transcendent God. Instead, he argued that there is only one infinite substance in the universe, which he called "God" or "Nature". Everything that exists is simply a modification or expression of this one divine substance.
- .- **Mind-Body Parallelism**: While his contemporary René Descartes argued that the mind and body are two separate interacting things, Spinoza proposed a monistic view. He argued that the mind and body are not separate; they are two different ways of looking at the exact same thing.
- . **Determinism**: Spinoza was a strict determinist who argued that everything happens out of logical necessity. There is no such thing as free will in the traditional sense; every human action, thought, and event is the inevitable result of prior causes and the natural laws of the universe.

Key Ethical & Political Beliefs

- .- **Overcoming Human Bondage**: Spinoza believed that human suffering ("bondage") comes from being a slave to our emotions and passions, which are often controlled by external things beyond our control. True human freedom comes from using reason to understand the world and our place in it.
- .- **The Purpose of Government**: In his political writings, Spinoza argued that the true purpose of the state is not to control or terrify people, but to preserve individual liberty, allowing citizens to live securely and use reason freely.
- .- **Radical Secularism**: He was a major pioneer of secular theology. He famously argued that the Bible is a work of human literature, questioned its divine origins, and asserted that religious authority should have no role in a democratic state.

Gottfried Wilhelm Leibniz

Gottfried Wilhelm Leibniz (1646-1716) was a German philosopher, mathematician, engineer, physicist, and political advisor of the early Enlightenment.

Leibniz was the “universal mind” of his time and (together with Newton) the inventor of infinitesimal calculus. He is considered one of the “greatest thinkers of all time” as well as one of the most important fore-runners of the Enlightenment.

René Descartes

The beginning of the Enlightenment can be attributed to the publication of Descartes' Discourse of the Method in 1637, with his method of systematically disbelieving everything unless there was a well-founded reason for accepting it, and featuring his famous dictum, “Cognito, ergo sum” (“I think, therefore I am”).

René Descartes (1596–1650) was a French philosopher who established a rationalist system of philosophy.

Descartes' contributions to the Enlightenment

- . (a) **Rationalism** : Descartes was the first modern rationalist, believing that reason and knowledge could be used to attain knowledge of eternal truths.
- . (b) **Method of doubt** : Descartes's method of doubt involved questioning all propositions that could be doubted (genesis of Scepticism).
- . © **Epistemology** : Descartes increased attention to epistemology.
- . (d) **Philosophy of religion** : Descartes displaced God from the centre of philosophical thought and made God the guarantor of the reliability of sense experience.
- . € **Modern philosophy** : Descartes is often called the father of modern philosophy.
- . (f) Descartes also contributed to mathematics and science. His works include geometry, meteorology, and optics.
- . (g) **Cartesian dualism**, Descartes is known for the idea that the mind and body are two different substances that interact with each other.

His treatise, the **Passion of the Soul**, (“passion” means emotions essentially) is based on the distinction between the body and the soul. The soul thinks (res cogitans) but is incorporeal, while the body is physical (res extensa) but does not think and is primarily defined by its form and movement. This is what is known as Cartesian dualism. Descartes explores this dichotomy of mind and body.

Descartes' method of systematic doubt encouraged individuals to question all previously accepted truths, promoting a culture of inquiry during the Enlightenment.

The ideas of the Enlightenment undermined the authority of the monarchy and religious officials and paved the way for the political revolutions of the 18th and 19th centuries.

The Enlightenment was marked by an increasing awareness of the relationship between the mind and body. There was increased questioning of religious dogma. The central doctrines of the Enlightenment were individual liberty, rule of law and religious freedom

Other Enlightenment thinkers in terms of who inspired the most discussion were John Locke (natural rights and liberty), Jean-Jacques Rousseau (a fairer society), Adam Smith (founder of modern economics), Immanuel Kant (founder of modern philosophy) and Thomas Paine (called for revolution).

Many historians now date the end of the Enlightenment as the start of the 19th century, with the latest proposed year being the death of Immanuel Kant in 1804.

John Locke

John Locke (1632-1704) was an English philosopher, political theorist, and medical researcher. He is considered one of the most influential Enlightenment thinkers and the founder of British empiricism. His work laid the foundation for modern liberalism and the US Constitution.

. (a) **Political views** Locke believed in the right to life, liberty, and property. He believed that governments existed to protect these rights and promote the public good. He believed that if a government failed to do so, the people have the right to replace it. He believed in the principle of majority rule and the separation of powers.

.(b) **Philosophical views** Locke believed that the mind is a blank slate, or tabula rasa, until experience provides knowledge. He believed that truth is independent of human desires and tastes. He believed that at least part of the truth is within the reach of human understanding.

Isaac Newton

Sir Isaac Newton (1643 – 1727) was an English polymath, a Christian and a key figure in the Scientific Revolution and in the Enlightenment. His book, *Philosophia Naturalis Principia* first published in 1687, achieved the first great unification in Physics and established classical mechanics. He was arguably the greatest scientist of his time. In him and his generation, we see the confluence of science, philosophy and religion, the unification across thought, and both the enlargement and specialisation of the philosophical domains.

Isaac Newton believed in God. He believed that God created the world and remained in control of it. His religious beliefs were reflected in his scientific and theological writings.

His Beliefs

- . (a) Newton believed that God was the ultimate source of matter.
- . (b) He believed that God created the world through his Son.
- . (c) He believed that God was a spirit who penetrated all matter.
- . (d) He believed that God had a "propensity to action" within the world.
- . (e) He believed that God's existence could not be denied in the face of the grandeur of all creation.
- . (f) He believed that divine revelation extended beyond Scripture to the Book of Nature.

His Christian faith would not have been considered orthodox by mainstream Christianity. He rejected the doctrine of the Trinity in favour of "one true God" as the Father alone. He believed that worshipping Jesus Christ as God was idolatry.

Emanuel Kant

Immanuel Kant (1724 – 1804) was born into a Prussian German family of Lutheran faith. Kant's comprehensive and systematic works embraced epistemology, metaphysics, ethics and aesthetics.

Kant was one of the foremost thinkers of the Enlightenment and arguably **one of the greatest philosophers of all time**. In him were subsumed (he challenged) the new trends that had begun with the rationalism (stressing reason) of René Descartes and the empiricism (stressing experience) of Francis Bacon.

At the foundation of Kant's system is the doctrine of "Transcendental Idealism," which emphasised a distinction between what we can experience (the natural, observable world) and what we cannot ("suprasensible" objects such as God and the soul). Kant argued that we can only have knowledge of things we can experience.

In his doctrine of transcendental idealism, Kant argued that space and time were mere "forms of intuition" that structure all "experience" and that the objects of experience were mere "appearances". The nature of things as they are in themselves is unknowable to us. Objects of experience conform to our spatial and temporal forms of intuition and the categories of our understanding, so that we have a priori cognition of those objects.

The fundamental idea of Kant's "critical philosophy" is human autonomy. He argues that the human understanding is the source of the general laws of nature that structure all our experience; and that human reason gives itself the moral law, which is our basis for belief in God, freedom, and immortality.

Kant believed that reason was the source of morality and that aesthetics arose from a faculty of disinterested judgment. Kant's religious views were deeply connected to his moral theory. Their exact nature remains in dispute.

Kant sought to account for the relation between our sensible and intellectual faculties. He needed to explain how we combine what is known as sensory knowledge with the other type of knowledge—that is, reasoned knowledge—these two being related but having very different processes.

Kant is credited with having innovated the way philosophical inquiry had been carried on at least up to the early nineteenth century. This shift consisted of several closely related innovations that, although highly contentious in themselves, have become important in subsequent philosophy and in the social sciences broadly construed:

Key philosophical Insights

- . (a) The human subject is seen as the centre of inquiry into human knowledge, such that it is impossible to philosophise about things as they exist independently of human perception or of how they are "for us";
 - . (b) The notion that it is possible to discover and systematically explore the inherent limits of the human ability to know entirely *a priori*.
 - . © The notion of the "categorical imperative", an assertion that people are naturally endowed with the ability and obligation toward right reason and acting.
 - . (d) The concept of "conditions of possibility", as in his notion of "the conditions of possible experience"; that is, that things, knowledge, and forms of consciousness rest on prior conditions that make them possible, so that, to understand or to know them, several conditions must be understood.
 - . (e) The claim that objective experience is actively constituted or constructed by the functioning of the human mind.
 - . (f) The concept of moral autonomy as central to humanity; and
 - . (g) The assertion of the principle that human beings should be treated as ends rather than mere means.
- Kant's ideas have been incorporated into a variety of schools of thought.

Belief in God

Immanuel Kant believed in God, and his work explores the existence and nature of the Supreme Being. Kant's ideas about God evolved over time.

- . **(i) Transcendental ideal** : God is a prototype of perfection that is necessary for everything in the world.
- . **(ii) Sovereign Good** : God is a condition of the supreme value of moral life.
- . **(iii) Moral ideal** : God is a moral ideal and guarantee of moral order.
- . **(IV) Possible existence** : God, personal immortality, Heaven, and Hell are possible, and are not disproven by science.
- . **(v) Moral argument** : God is necessary to ensure that justice prevails in the end.

He was racist, until the last decade of his life.

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Kant's Works

- . The Critique of Pure Reason (1781, 1787)
- . The Critique of Practical Reason (1788)
- . The Critique of the Power of Judgment (1790)

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Modern Philosophy - 19th Century

Modern philosophy's central approach is rational thought, and its central objective is the purpose of existence. It is marked by a high level of individualism.

The philosophic eye has variously embraced the whole spectrum of the known and conceived worlds, seeking comprehension of the cosmos and its (origins and) workings as a whole.

It draws knowledge from the empiricism of the sciences and the rational use of the mind. Modern philosophy is deeply concerned with skepticism, which is valid doubt of something being true, and so there is a drive to find an ultimate basis for human knowledge.

At the root, they examine the nature of empirical reality on the one hand and intellectual knowledge on the other, both, physical and metaphysical. The common element is man's facultative abilities to perceive and conceptualise the same, and form meaningful enquiry. Philosophers also explore the behavioral basis of morality, the meaning of justice, liberty and free will.

The Metaphysical Issues Again

As we review the flood and intensity of philosophical thought from hereon, it is good we remember that our quest is the Destiny of Man. This is very much related to the metaphysical issues.

From our evolutionary studies, the primary unanswered questions are: Is there a Supreme Being who created the universe and Man? And what is the purpose of Man? Everything else is about what happens or how it happens.

Theism (Deism)

Not surprisingly, the existence of a Prime Mover or Supreme Being invariably surfaces as the paramount issue. The last constitutes our trail. Arguments in favour include:

- .(a) **Cosmological Argument** : Based on the idea that the universe requires a First Cause
- .(b) **Ontological Argument** : Based on the idea that a perfect being must exist in reality
- .(c) **Modal Perfection Argument** : Based on the idea that something is supreme if nothing is greater
- .(d) **Moral Authority**. There must be a source, and an authority to which man is accountable

Theism is the proposition that God exists, and it is the dominant view among philosophers of religion. The latter combine their doctrinal revelations with their philosophic understandings to offer a world-view which generally include a moral framework for a good life, an immortal soul and an after-life for moral behaviour.

The concept of a Supreme Being is central to (indeed the sine qua non of) the great revealed religions, namely Judaism, Christianity, and Islam (and their related faiths). It is invariably identified, understood, accepted, put in place in different forms or simply taken for granted by the other major civilisations. At one point, it was thought to be a prop for much of the still unknown. With our facultative development, confidence in the independence of our own intellectual abilities, and the separation of the secular from the religious, philosophers have circled round to examining the validity of the notion of a godhead. One observer commented that this has been enabled by no small measure by the post-Enlightenment freedom to think and to dare independently of threats of blasphemy and punishment.

Needless to say, the modern era has given rise to atheists as well as theists, while the religions have engaged in aligning themselves with the wealth of scientific knowledge and modern philosophical thinking, including evolution, and it is left to the individual to choose. Ultimately, each human settles on what he deems is his destiny and what should be his way of life, and practice religion according to choice.

Belief

As modern scientific and philosophical thought clears the areas of dis-belief and mis-information, and metaphysics reaches the boundaries of the unknowable, we are left with the choice what to believe and build our lives around. Belief is emerging as a central function of the human mind. We are called to exercise it all the time.

In many cases, a person or philosopher takes up a viewpoint or belief from his direct experience of the world,, and adopts values and advocates a theory or causes from these.

The ultimate yardstick is the reasonableness of believing something. That in turn may depend on what else one believes. The obverse side is being brain-washed to believe something.

In matters of belief in the unknown and unknowable, belief must depend on faith. Faith in turn is belief in the reasonableness of propositions relating to the unknown, ie. all things considered it must fill a gap. The Supreme Being is very much such a case..

Georg Wilhelm Friedrich Hegel

Georg Wilhelm Friedrich Hegel (1770-1831) was a German Lutheran professor philosopher who started Hegelianism.

Hegelianism is a philosophical movement that focuses on history and logic, and the idea that "the rational is the real".

Hegel was the last of the great system builders of Western philosophy and the greatest and most extravagant representative of the school of absolute idealism. He introduced the use of the conceptual tools of the "dialectic" and the "synthesis".

Hegel believed in God, but in a way that differs from conventional conceptions. Hegel's philosophy sought to replace faith with knowledge.

Hegel's conception of **God**:

Hegel believed that God is immanent in the world, and that human reason can come to know God. He believed that God is revealed through the world and experience. He believed that God is part of a process that includes humans, the world, and nature.. He believed that human reason can penetrate the inner essence of God. He believed that human history is the history of God's becoming human.

Hegel's views on **Christianity**:

Hegel considered himself an orthodox Lutheran professor of philosophy. He rejected the Deist concept of God, which he criticised as abstract and empty. He believed that Christ's existence as a human being showed that truth can exist in the world.

Hegel's God does not 'intervene' in the world; rather, Hegel's God is omnipresent in the world, giving each of us the full reality and thus the blessedness of which we are capable .

According to Hegel, the absolute Spirit reveals itself in three stages: art, religion, and philosophy. All of them, in their way, take the absolute as their content. For this reason, Hegel understands the Absolute and God as the same thing. In religion, the absolute Spirit manifests itself as God.

Hegel's **Dialectic World-view**:

Hegel developed the concept of the dialectic, a process of change involving a thesis, antithesis, and synthesis, which Marx and Engels later adapted. However, Hegel viewed this process as driven by ideas and the "world spirit," while Marxists applied it to material conditions and class struggle, creating dialectical materialism.

For Hegel, only the whole is true. Every stage or phase or moment is partial, and therefore partially untrue. Hegel's grand idea is "totality" which preserves within it each of the ideas or stages that it has overcome or subsumed.

In Hegel's view of materialism, objects are what they are by means of a synthesis of form and matter. Specifically, forms shape matter, give it its determinacy. According to this view, everything is "formed matter."

Arthur Schopenhauer

Arthur Schopenhauer (1788-1860) was a German philosopher known for his pessimistic views on life.

Here are some of his main ideas:

- ***The Will***: Schopenhauer believed this as the fundamental driving force behind all living beings, a blind, irrational, and instinctual force that strives for survival and reproduction.
- ***Pessimism***: He was a pessimist who believed that life is inherently suffering, and that happiness is merely the absence of pain or the temporary satisfaction of desires.
- ***The World as Representation***: Schopenhauer argued that the world we experience is a representation or perception created by our minds, and that we can never truly know the "thing-in-itself" (the reality independent of our perception).
- ***Denial of the Will***: He believed that the only way to achieve true freedom and escape suffering is to deny the Will, through asceticism, self-denial, and the rejection of worldly desires.
- ***Influence of Eastern Thought***: Schopenhauer was influenced by Eastern philosophies, such as Buddhism and Hinduism, and incorporated elements of these traditions into his own philosophy.

Søren Kierkegaard

Søren Aabye Kierkegaard (1813 –1855) was a Danish theologian, philosopher, poet and religious author who is widely considered to be the first existentialist philosopher.

A central tenet of existentialism is that personal freedom, individual responsibility, and deliberate choice are essential to the pursuit of self-discovery and the determination of life's meaning.

Kierkegaard's theological work focuses on Christian ethics, the institution of the Church, and the differences between purely objective proofs of Christian faith.

Theistic existentialism is the philosophy of thinkers who did not deny the existence of God altogether but rejected the idea that God interferes with man's everyday life. God may exist, but he does not concern himself with trivia.

Much of his philosophical work deals with the issues of how one lives as a "single individual", giving priority to concrete human reality over abstract thinking and highlighting the importance of personal choice and commitment.

Kierkegaard's theology focused on the individual's relationship with God. Much of his work deals with Christian love. His psychological work explored the emotions and feelings of individuals when faced with life choices.

Karl Marx

Karl Marx (1818 –1883) was a German-born philosopher, political theorist, economist, journalist, and revolutionary socialist. He is best-known for the 1848 pamphlet *The Communist Manifesto* (written with Friedrich Engels) and his three-volume *Das Kapital* (1867–1894) which employs his theory of historical materialism in an analysis of capitalism. Marx's ideas and their subsequent development gave the world first Marxism and then socialism.

Dialectical materialism is a philosophy developed from the writings of Karl Marx and Friedrich Engels that serves as the basis for Marxism.

While in Paris in 1844, Marx met Engels, who became his closest friend and collaborator. After moving to Brussels in 1845, they were active in the Communist League, and in 1848 they wrote their Manifesto. Marx in 1849 moved to London, where he wrote *Das Kapital*. Marx wrote on revolution, the state and the transition to communism. Marx held that human societies develop through class conflict and in that final stage reached equality.

The term "dialectical materialism" was coined in 1887 by Joseph Dietz, a socialist who corresponded with Marx, and again by the Russian Marxist Georgii Plekhanov in 1891. However, the ideas behind the theory were developed by Karl Marx and Friedrich Engels.

Marx and Engels adapted the Hegelian dialectic into a materialist theory of history. They argued that capitalism is a structure that is developed by the interaction of societal forces, not human greed. They developed the dialectical method to apply to ideas and material reality. Stalin defined dialectical materialism as the world outlook of Marxism-Leninism.

Karl Marx did not believe in God. He was an atheist. He was a materialist who believed that human history was driven by economic forces. He saw religion as a tool to maintain social inequality and oppress the working class.

Marx believed that religion was a conservative force that served the interests of the wealthy. He thought that religion perpetuated social inequality by reinforcing the status quo. Marx believed that religion was an expression of distress and a protest against the real distress. He said "Religion was the opium of the people." He thought that religion would become unnecessary when oppressive social conditions were destroyed.

Marx believed that human history could only be understood by having Man as the central focus instead of God. He thought that people are free, creative beings who have the potential to transform the world.

John Henry Newman

John Henry Newman (1801 -1890), born in Birmingham, was an influential churchman and man of letters of the 19th century, who led the Oxford Movement in the Church of England and later became a Cardinal in the Catholic Church, and was canonised a saint by the latter in 2019.

Newman believed in the reality of **God**.

He believed that Jesus Christ revealed himself historically. He believed that God reveals himself to individuals through the material world. He believed that God governs all things in accordance with their nature. Newman believed that conscience is a moral sense that does not rely on a logical medium. He believed that conscience is a stern monitor that calls people to love, do good, and avoid

In the widening tumult and divisions of the religious and philosophical worlds at the time, Newman's re-affirmations of their fundamentals anchored Christianity and inspired them to re-affirm their philosophical positions, among other things taking into account the discoveries of science,

This period marked the beginning of a modern revival of Thomas Aquinas's thought. Thomism is a theological and philosophical school that originated from the work of Thomas Aquinas, a Dominican philosopher and theologian who lived from 1225–1274. Aquinas's natural law theory influenced ideas about human liberty and the moral limits of government authority.

Friedrich Nietzsche

Friedrich Wilhelm Nietzsche (1844 –1900) was a widely influential German philosopher. He was a classical scholar, philosopher, and critic of culture.

His writings on truth, morality, language, aesthetics, cultural theory, history, nihilism, power, consciousness, and the meaning of existence exerted an enormous influence on Western philosophy and intellectual history.

In his book *The Gay Science* (1882), Nietzsche wrote that “God is dead.” His statement refers to his belief that traditional Christianity would no longer set the moral standard for human life in the modern world. Nietzsche believed that morality was determined by individual perspectives.

His philosophy is mainly referred to as “existentialism”, a famous twentieth century philosophy focusing on man's existential situation. In his works, Nietzsche questioned the basis of good and evil. He believed that heaven was an unreal place or “the world of ideas”.

Human beings, according to Nietzsche, were fundamentally a part of nature. He rejected all accounts of morality that were grounded in a conception of human activity as answerable to a supernatural or otherworldly source of value.

As an esoteric moralist, Nietzsche aims at freeing higher human beings from their false consciousness about morality (their false belief that this morality was good for them), not at a transformation of society at large.

He was the founder of Nihilism. It is the belief that all values are baseless and that nothing can be known or communicated. It is often associated with extreme pessimism and a radical scepticism that condemns existence. A true nihilist would believe in nothing, have no loyalties, and no purpose other than, perhaps, an impulse to destroy.

In Nietzsche's critique of Christianity, he contended that God and the whole spiritual reality that Christians believed in were imaginary, and he provides both emotional and rational reasons for his position in *Thus Spoke Zarathustra*.

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Modern Philosophy – 20th Century

Modern philosophy is characterised by the focus on knowledge, scientific issues, scepticism, and individualism. Some of the main streams include:

- . **(a) Analytic philosophy** A dominant school of contemporary philosophy, although there is no one method or set of doctrines that all analytic philosophers share.
- . **(b) Empiricism** A philosophy that underpins the scientific method, experiential learning, and various learning theories
- . **(c) Existentialism** A philosophical movement that explores the freedom and subjectivity of humans
- . **(d) Idealism** A major philosophical movement that aims to describe reality as a rational whole
- . **(e) Rationalism** A philosophy considered a key element in modern society, which is based on the rule of reason
- . **(f) Humanism** An ethical-philosophical foundation of modernity that is a dynamic field of self-reflection on the human being
- . **(g) Materialism** A philosophical monism that holds that matter is the fundamental substance in nature

Other branches of philosophy include: epistemology, metaphysics, logic, axiology, political philosophy, aesthetics, and ethics.

Edmund Gustav Albrecht Husserl

Edmund Gustav Albrecht Husserl (1859–1938) was an Austrian-German philosopher and mathematician of Jewish background who established the school of phenomenology

In his mature work, he sought to develop a systematic foundational science based on the so-called phenomenological *reductio*, a method of studying consciousness. Arguing that transcendental consciousness sets the limits of all possible knowledge, Husserl redefined phenomenology as a transcendental-idealist philosophy.

Husserl's work sought to resolve the gap between empiricism and rationalism. His work influenced 20th-century philosophy and remains influential today.

Key concepts

. **(a) Phenomenology** A method of studying consciousness that emphasises experience and isolates it from assumptions of existence or causal influence

. **(b) Intentionality** The idea that consciousness is object-directed and that the human mind is the only thing in the universe that can direct itself toward other things.

. **© Transcendental idealism** The idea that transcendental consciousness sets the limits of all possible knowledge

. **(d) Epoché** A method of "bracketing" that involves performing descriptions from a first-person point of view

. **(e) Life-world** The idea of the individual's personal world as directly experienced

Husserl's thought is revolutionary, most notably in the distinction between "natural" and "phenomenological" modes of understanding.

In the former, sense-perception in correspondence with the material realm constitutes the known reality, and understanding is premised on the accuracy of the perception and the objective knowability of what is called the "real world".

Phenomenological understanding strives to be rigorously "presuppositionless" by means of what Husserl calls "phenomenological reductionism". This reduction is not conditioned but rather transcendental: in Husserl's terms, pure consciousness of absolute Being.

In Husserl's work, consciousness of any given thing calls for discerning its meaning as an "intentional object". Such an object does not simply strike the senses, to be interpreted or misinterpreted by mental reason; it has already been selected and "grasped", grasping having an etymological connotation of "perceive".

Key belief

Edmund Husserl was a Lutheran, a philosopher who was open to religious experience and respected all authentic religious beliefs. He was not committed to a specific church creed.

Husserl believed that God is a creator and the "entelechie", or idea of endless telos³⁵. He believed that God is a person and a member of the universal community of transcendental subjects. He believed that God presupposes the being of transcendental intersubjectivity. He believed that religious experience can be described in terms of four places, including God as a personality and a divine source within the I. He believed that the maintenance of the phenomenological reduction was a kind of religious conversion.

Henri-Louis Bergson

Henri-Louis Bergson (1859–1941) was a French philosopher who was influential in the traditions of analytical philosophy.

³⁵ "Entelechy" (Aristotle) is the transition from a state of *merely being able to happen* (potential) to the *actual, complete reality* (actuality). It refers to the vital or inner force that directs an organism's development or a system's organization towards its natural goal or completion.

Born in Paris, Bergson became one of the most celebrated philosophers of his time, known for his innovative ideas on time, consciousness, and the nature of life itself. His work earned him widespread acclaim, including the Nobel Prize in Literature in 1927.

Bergson is known for his arguments that processes of immediate experience and intuition are more significant than abstract rationalism and science for understanding reality.

Bergson defined intuition as a simple, indivisible experience of sympathy through which one is moved into the inner being of an object to grasp what is unique and ineffable within it .

His vigorous thought sought to synthesise science and philosophy, and his religious concerns led him to Catholicism.

He proposed that the whole evolutionary process should be seen as the endurance of an *élan vital* ("vital impulse") that is continuously developing. Evolution has at its very heart this life force or vital impulse.

In *An Introduction to Metaphysics* (1912), Bergson expands on the central role of intuition, the forward edge sensor of progress. He defined intuition as a simple, indivisible experience of sympathy through which one is moved into the inner being of an object to grasp what is unique and ineffable within it .

For Bergson, "real" time (as opposed to the abstract "clock" time of natural science) is fundamentally a matter of conscious experience—that is, the experience of duration. He believed that duration is a mobile and fluid concept, which cannot be understood through analysis, but only through intuition.

Bertrand Russell

Bertrand Russell (1872– 970), born in Wales, was a British philosopher, logician, and social reformer, a founding figure in the analytic movement and recipient of the Nobel Prize for Literature in 1950. Russell's contributions to logic, epistemology and the philosophy of mathematics established him as one of the foremost philosophers of the 20th century.

Bertrand Russell's key ideas included logicism, the theory of descriptions, and the idea of a logical language. He was a founder of modern analytical philosophy.

Russell argued that the whole of mathematics could be derived from a few simple axioms that made no use of specifically mathematical notions, such as number and square root, but were rather confined to purely logical notions, such as proposition and class.

Key ideas:

. **(a) Logicism** The idea that mathematics can be reduced to logic. The belief that mathematics is based on a few simple axioms that use logical notions, not mathematical ones

. **(b) Theory of descriptions** The idea that a description can be meaningful without referring to anything.

. **(c) Logical language** The idea that a formal, idealised language based on mathematical logic would be better than everyday language. The idea that a logical language would allow for the description of combinations of atomic and molecular facts

Other ideas

. **(d) The theory of neutral monism** This holds that the world is made of one type of substance that is neither mental nor physical

. **(e) Ethics** The idea that ethics is not a domain of knowledge

. **(f) Death** There is nothing in the human person that survives the event of death.

At the age of eighteen he became an atheist . He found it a great relief to be free from some of the fears and dogma surrounding religion. He was also known for his advocacy for humanitarian ideals and freedom of thought.

Russell's Platonism involved a belief that there are mind-independent entities that need not exist to be real, that is, to subsist and have being. Entities, or what has been (and may or may not exist) are called terms, and terms include anything that can be thought.

Russell was, prior to being a socialist, a Georgist, the economic and social philosophy of which posits that while individuals should own the value they create, the economic rent derived from land (including natural resources and locations) should be shared by all members of society. This is typically achieved through a land value tax In 1914 he wrote to Lady Ottoline Morrell saying "It is clear the Socialists are the hope of the world".

Jean-Paul Charles Aymard Sartre

Jean-Paul Charles Aymard Sartre (1905 –1980) was a French philosopher, playwright, novelist, screenwriter, political activist, biographer, and literary critic considered a leading figure in 20th century French philosophy and Marxism. Sartre was one of the key figures in the philosophy of existentialism and phenomenology He was awarded the 1994 Nobel Prize for Literature

Together, Sartre and Simone de Beauvoir challenged their cultural and social upbringings, their assumptions and expectations in both lifestyles and thought, the conflict between oppressive, spiritually destructive conformity and an “authentic” way of being.

John Dewey

John Dewey (1859-1952) was an American philosopher, psychologist and educational reformer He was one of the most prominent American scholars in the first half of the twentieth century.

Dewey was one of the primary figures associated with the philosophy of pragmatism and is considered one of the founding thinkers of functional psychology.

Dewey was a major educational reformer for the 20th century. John Dewey believed that people learn best through experiences and social interactions. His ideas about education and social reform are known as the "John Dewey Theory".

Education

- . **(a) Learning by doing** Students learn best through hands-on experiences and problem-solving.
- . **(b) Progressive education** :Curriculum builds on children's interests and experiences.
- . **(c) Democracy in education** Students participate in making decisions about what to learn. .
- . **(d) Experiential learning** Students actively engage with material through hands-on activities.
- . **(e) Inquiry-based learning** Students use previous experiences to create new meaning.

Social reform

- . **(a) Cooperative learning** Encourages a democratic classroom that promotes a democratic society.
- . **(b) Art** A product of culture that expresses the significance of people's lives.
- . **(x) Reflection:** A complex, rigorous, intellectual, and emotional enterprise that takes time to do well.

Other ideas

- . (a) Humans are social beings inclined to be cooperative.
- . (b) Scientific intelligence is the key to reform.
- . (c) All real-world experiences can be educational.
- . (d) Knowledge is socially constructed based on our experiences.
- . (e) The educational process has two sides — one is psychological and the other is sociological.
- . (f) Art is a product of culture, through which that the people of a given culture express themselves

He believed that a democratic society of informed and engaged inquirers was the best means of promoting human interests. Dewey taught at universities and wrote influential books such as *Democracy and Education* (1916) and *Experience and Nature* (1925).

Alfred North Whitehead

Alfred North Whitehead (1861-1947) was an English mathematician and philosopher who created the philosophic school known as process philosophy, which has been applied in a wide variety of disciplines, including ecology, education, economics and psychology, among others.

Alfred North Whitehead's philosophy is based on the idea that the world is a network of interrelated processes. Whitehead believed that we are part of this network and that our actions have consequences for the world. He said "there is urgency in coming to see the world as a web of interrelated processes..."

In his early career Whitehead wrote the three-volume *Principia Mathematica* (1910–1913), with his former student Bertrand Russell, considered one of the twentieth century's most important works.

Key ideas

- . (a) **Actual entities** The fundamental elements of reality, which are both temporal and atemporal
- . (b) **Organic philosophy** The study of how organic entities relate to each other as they develop
- . (x) **Causality** Events are causally related, and each occasion of experience is influenced by previous and future occasions
- . (d) **Free will** Free will is inherent to the universe
- . (y) **Wisdom** A way of handling knowledge that increases value

Other ideas

- . (a) The internal relatedness of experiences
- . (b) The importance of religion
- . (x) The need to see the world as a web of interrelated processes
- . (d) The need to embrace certain ideas, such as freedom and peace, to develop a virtuous civilization

Whitehead's process philosophy argues that "there is urgency in coming to see the world as a web of interrelated processes of which we are integral parts, so that all of our choices and actions have consequences for the world around us." For this reason, one of the most promising applications of Whitehead's thought in the 21st century has been in the area of ecological civilisation and environmental ethics pioneered by John B. Cobb,

Jacques Maritain

Jacques Maritain (1882–1973) was a French philosopher. Raised as a Protestant, he was agnostic before converting to Catholicism in 1906. An author of more than 60 books, he helped to revive Thomas Aquinas for modern times, and was influential in the development and drafting of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights. Maritain's interest and works spanned many aspects of philosophy, including aesthetics, political theory, philosophy of science, metaphysics, education, liturgy and ecclesiology.

Maritain's philosophy is based on the view that metaphysics is prior to epistemology. Being is first apprehended implicitly in sense experience, and is known in two ways. First, being is known reflexively by abstraction from sense experience. One experiences a particular being, e.g. a cup, a dog, etc. and through reflection ("bending back") on the judgement, e.g. "this is a dog", one recognises that the object in question is an existent. Second, in light of attaining being reflexively through apprehension of sense experience, one may arrive at what Maritain calls "an Intuition of Being". For Maritain this is the point of departure for metaphysics; without the "intuition of Being" one cannot be a metaphysician at all.

Jacques Maritain believed in the importance of the individual and the community. His ideas included:

- . (a) **Integral humanism** The idea that humanism should recognise the whole person, including their spiritual dimension.
- . (b) **The relationship between art and morality** : Art is interpersonal, and the community can regulate art that goes against the perfection of human life.
- . (x) **Natural law** A universal law that is rooted in the divine and written into human nature by God.

- . **(d) The state** The state is not the supreme master of the body politic, but an organisation that serves the interest of man.
- . **(y) Cooperation** : People of different intellectual positions can cooperate to achieve common practical aims.
- . **(f) The individual person** The individual person transcends the political community.
- . **(g) Science, philosophy, poetry, and mysticism** These are legitimate ways of knowing reality.
- . **(h) Moral philosophy** Moral philosophy must take into account other branches of human knowledge.

Maritain's work was based on Aristotelianism and Thomism, and also incorporated ideas from other classical and modern philosophers.

Ludwig Wittgenstein

Ludwig Wittgenstein (1889-1951) was an Austrian philosopher known for his work in logic, philosophy of language, and philosophy of mind. Here are some of his main ideas:

- ***Language Games***: Wittgenstein argued that language is not a fixed system of rules, but rather a collection of "language games" or social practices that govern meaning and use.
- ***Family Resemblance***: He introduced the concept of "family resemblance" to describe how words and concepts are related to each other through a network of similarities, rather than a set of fixed definitions.
- ***Private Language Argument***: Wittgenstein rejected the idea of a private language, arguing that language is inherently social and public, and that meaning is determined by use in a shared context.
- ***Philosophy as Therapy***: Wittgenstein saw philosophy as a therapeutic activity, aimed at dissolving philosophical problems by revealing the underlying linguistic and conceptual confusions that give rise to them.

In *Tractatus Logico-Philosophicus*, his early work, Wittgenstein developed a picture theory of language, arguing that language represents the world through a system of logical picturing.

In *Philosophical Investigations*, his later work, Wittgenstein shifted his focus to the social and practical aspects of language, arguing that meaning is determined by use in a shared form of life.

Wittgenstein's emphasis was on the importance of ordinary language and everyday usage in understanding meaning and philosophical concepts.

Wittgenstein's ideas have had a significant influence on various fields, including philosophy of language, philosophy of mind, and cognitive science.

George Edward Moore

George Edward Moore (1873–1958) was a British philosopher and a founding figure of analytical philosophy .

Analytic philosophy is not a specific doctrine but an overlapping set of approaches to problems. From its inception, analytic philosophy has been highly problem oriented. Its 20th-century origin is often attributed to the work of Moore.. Philosophers in this tradition generally have agreed with him that the purpose of analysis is the clarification of thought. Their varied methods have included the creation of symbolic languages as well as the close examination of ordinary speech, and the objects to be clarified have ranged from concepts to natural laws and from notions in the physical sciences (such as mass, force, and testability) to ordinary terms such as responsibility and *see* -oriented. There is probably no major philosophical problem that its practitioners have failed to address.

His core philosophical system is grounded in the rejection of grand metaphysical systems in favour of linguistic clarity, rigorous analysis, and a steadfast commitment to common sense. These are his basic ideas:

1. Moral Philosophy and the "Naturalistic Fallacy"

.- **Non-Naturalism:** Moore argued that moral properties like "good" are not natural properties (eg. they are not identical to "being pleasurable" or "being desired"). Instead, they are simple, unanalysable, non-natural properties that can be grasped intuitively.

.- **The Naturalistic Fallacy:** Moore famously argued that attempting to define the moral term "good" in terms of any natural property is a logical error. If "good" simply meant "pleasurable," saying "pleasure is good" would be a meaningless tautology, which it is not.

.- **The Open-Question Argument:** To prove his point, Moore used the "open question" test. If someone claims that "good means whatever is desired," it is always an "open question" whether what is desired *itself* is actually good, showing that the two concepts are distinct.

.- **Ideal Utilitarianism:** He argued that right actions are those that maximise the greatest total intrinsic good. For Moore, the greatest intrinsic goods were the pleasures of human intercourse (personal affection) and the enjoyment of beautiful objects (aesthetic experiences).

2. Defence of Common Sense

.- **Common Sense Realism:** Against philosophical sceptics who doubt the existence of the external world, Moore defended the common-sense view of the world.

.- **Proof of the External World:** Moore argued that a philosophical proof of the external world can be achieved simply by holding up his two hands and stating, "Here is a hand, and here is another."

3. Attack on Idealism

.- **Rejection of Monism:** Moore was a fierce critic of British Idealism (the dominant philosophy at the time). Idealists hold that the universe is an "organic unity" where everything is connected and ordinary objects depend entirely on the mind to exist.

.- **Realist Pluralism:** Moore advocated **pluralism** and realism. He argued that objects and their properties exist independently of being perceived by the mind, and that the world is composed of many distinct, separate things.

Moore highlighted the distinction between the truth of a proposition which is self-evident (like it is raining) and the absurdity of asserting that you do not believe it.

Pierre Teilhard de Chardin³⁶

Pierre Teilhard de Chardin (1881 –1955) was a French Jesuit, a scientist, a theologian, a philosopher and a teacher. His pre-eminent expertise was as a palaeornithologist. As a pioneer in this field and a Catholic priest, he looked directly across the divide between Genesis and his science.

His work attempted to reconcile his religious faith with his scientific studies. His philosophical and theological ideas are vast and complex. He was a **visionary**. He crossed the orthodox on both sides, doctrinally earning the disfavour of the Catholic church as well as the strong disapproval of the atheistic component of the scientific community. It was the first Catholic attempt to take in evolution under its belt.

His was the only direct answer to my quest, even though a vision. If nothing else, it set an example (to both sides) of the bridge-building necessary in the 21st century. In some respects he was prophetic. Both sides, his scientific colleagues and his (Catholic) church rejected his ideas, but he remained a practising priest all his life.

³⁶ - https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Pierre_Teilhard_de_Chardin

His Contribution

His contribution was to present a synthesis of the evolution of the cosmos and of man. He saw it as one and the same process, combining a physical and a spiritual stage, and identifying its ultimate objective, man. His proposal was made substantially in his book *The Phenomenon of Man* (1938).

.What he did in fact propose was that the evolution was the spiritual-physical process by which man has been created and may progress to unification with the divine . In his book *The Divine Milieu*”, he applied his proposition to a re-interpretation of Christian doctrine on Jesus Christ, drawing the latter as the apex of evolution.

Books by Pierre Teilhard de Chardin

- . (a) **The Phenomenon of Man** : Published in 1938,
- . (b) **The Divine Milieu** : Published in 1957
- . (c) **The Future of Man** : Published in 1959
- . (d) **Hymn of the Universe** : Published in 1961
- . (y) **The Making of a Mind: Letters From a Soldier-Priest 1914-1919** : A collection of letters

Evolution

A Physical-Spiritual Process

Teilhard de Chardin saw evolution as a single process, combining physical, mixed and spiritual stages, in its ultimate objective, man. Teilhard made sense of the universe by assuming it had a vitalist evolutionary process. He interpreted complexity as the axis of evolution of matter into a geosphere, a biosphere, into consciousness (in man), and then to supreme consciousness (the Omega Point). He was a leading proponent of **orthogenesis** the idea that evolution occurs in a directional, goal-driven way.

Evolution was not a just a physical process, but a cosmic one, where matter and energy converged to form increasingly complex systems. Teilhard viewed evolution as a process that leads through increasing complexity to consciousness. Teilhard describes humankind as evolution becoming conscious of itself.

Teilhard taught that the evolutionary process is governed by a 'law of 'complexification' which dictates that inorganic matter will reach ever more complex forms, resulting in inorganic matter being followed by organic matter and organic matter being followed by conscious life forms.

Teilhard de Chardin proposed a cosmic law connecting complexity and consciousness, suggesting that evolutionary progress is angled towards a higher non-physical plane of existence

His vision of a cosmic and universal Christ challenges traditional understandings of Christianity and offered a unique perspective on the relationship between faith and science.

Teilhard abandoned literal interpretations of creation in the Book of Genesis in favour of an allegorical and theological Interpretation Teilhard made a total commitment to the evolutionary process as the core of his spirituality, at a time when other religious thinkers felt evolutionary thinking challenged the structure of conventional Christian faith.

Noosphere

In Teilhard's conception of the evolution of the species, a **collective identity** begins to develop as trade and the transmission of ideas increases. Knowledge accumulates and is transmitted in increasing levels of depth and complexity.

This leads to a further augmentation of consciousness and the emergence of a **thinking layer** that envelops the Earth. Teilhard calls the new membrane the “noosphere” (from the Greek “*nous*”, meaning mind).

The noosphere is the collective consciousness of humanity, the networks of thought and emotion in which all are immersed. The Noosphere is a thinking or mind sphere that envelops the Earth

(NB: He could not have imagined precisely how, but the Internet and our information-based society of today are remarkable materialisations of this)

Omega Point

The Omega Point is a theorised future event in which the entirety of the universe spirals toward a final point of unification.

The unfolding of the material cosmos is described from primordial particles to the development of life, human beings and the noosphere, and finally to his vision of the Omega Point in the future, which is "pulling" all creation towards it.

Teilhard believed that evolution will culminate in a state of absolute collective consciousness, called the Omega Point. The Omega Point is the future state where human consciousness merges with the divine.

The Omega Point is a mystical convergence that could be called the Singularity or the Rapture of the Nerds. Layers of consciousness will converge, fusing and consuming them in itself. .

Human Nature

Teilhard believed that humans are self-conscious creatures with freedom and rationality. Humans have the capacity for action and inquiry. Humans are morally idealistic and that social advancement will lead to reconciliation. He states that "no evolutionary future awaits anyone except in association with everyone else."

Teilhard emphasises that each individual facet of consciousness will remain conscious of itself at the end of the process

Teilhard believed that technology, urbanisation, and modern communications are converging mankind towards a single society.

Cosmic Christ

Inevitably Teilhard should identify Jesus Christ as the Omega Point. He believes that Christ is not just a historical figure, but a cosmic reality that permeates all of existence., ie. the one who "holds together" the universe.

Core Ideas on Original Sin

Teilhard de Chardin reconciled original sin with evolution by rejecting a literal Adam and Eve and an initial earthly paradise. Instead, he reframed the "Fall" as a **symbolic condition** of human imperfection and growing pains inherent in a universe that is still evolving towards a spiritual unity with Christ.

. _ **Rejection of a Single Couple:** He argued that humanity descended from multiple ancestral lineages rather than a single Adam and Eve.

. - **Suffering as Part of Life:** He viewed pain, death, and moral struggle not as a punishment for a historical sin, but as natural byproducts of a developing biological world.

. - **Sin as a Universal State:** He redefined original sin as the collective friction, selfishness, and moral lag of humanity as we slowly move from animal selfishness towards higher spiritual consciousness (the *noosphere*).

. = **The Omega Point**: He saw Christ (Omega Christ) as the ultimate goal drawing all creation forward, transforming redemption into an ongoing evolutionary completion rather than just fixing a past mistake.

Core Ideas on Incarnation, Death of Christ

Teilhard de Chardin explained the Incarnation and death of Christ as **evolutionary events**. He viewed Christ as not merely a remedy for human sin, but as the **driving force of the universe** , embedding Himself in physical matter to pull all creation towards a divine unity called the Omega Point .

Why Christ Had to Incarnate

. - **Universal Communion (Cosmic Christ)**: For Teilhard, the Incarnation is not limited to Jesus of Nazareth; it is a **cosmic event** . God enters physical matter (*spirit-matter*) so that the entire material universe can be divinised and gathered into His body.

. - **The Culmination of Evolution**: He traced reality through phases—from matter (cosmogenesis) to life (biogenesis) to human thought (anthropogenesis)—culminating in **Christogenesis** , where Christ becomes the organic centre enabling and drawing all growing complexity toward Himself.

. _ **Fulfilment of Creation**: Christ had to become human to provide an internal, physical, and spiritual heart for the cosmos, ensuring that evolution has a loving, conscious direction rather than ending in cold isolation.

Why Christ Had to Die

. - **The Law of Transformation**: Teilhard saw the Cross as the symbol of a universal law: **growth requires surrender** . Every leap forward in the universe demands the breaking down of an old form to make way for a higher state of unity.

. - **Absorbing Suffering into Evolution**: Human pain, struggle, and death are not meaningless; when united with Christ's passion, they become the energy that propels the world forward. Through His death and resurrection, Christ transforms suffering into the birth pains of a redeemed creation.

. - **The Pleroma (Fullness)**: Death allows Christ to break free of local-historical limits and spread universally. By passing through death, the Risen Christ spiritualises matter and anchors creation's final convergence in God's infinite love.

Visionary

Teilhard de Chardin published the Phenomenon of Man in 1938, exactly six years before the first computer was created, eight years before invention of the semiconductor, the start of the Technological age, and exactly ten years before the mankind adopted the Universal Declaration of Human Rights.

He daring vision set an example of convergence for the next generation of scientists and theologians of all cultures ad persuasions.

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Chapter Seven

Into The Brave New World

From the **Prologue**

Evolution has already moved Man through four Turning Points since his **Emergence**:

- . (0) Turning Point Zero: **Emergence**. From 50,000 CE
Emergence of Hunter and Gatherers, to Nomads, Settlements, and Agriculture.
- . (1) Turning Point One: **Cradles of Civilisation**. From 12,000 CE
Urban communities, states, kingdoms, ancient civilisations and empires
- . (2) Turning Point Two: **Modern Civilisation**. From 1500 CE
Discovery of the Solar System and Planets, the Renaissance, the **Scientific Revolution**,
Colonisation of the Earth, Global occupation
- . (3) Turning Point Three: **Towards a Global Society**. From 1950s
The United Nations and the Declaration of Universal Human Rights
The Quantum Mechanics-Relativity revolution
The Digital Age
Information Technology, computers
IT and Comms global networks, Internet
Digitisation of human records
An information-based civilisation
- . (4) Turning Point Four: **Towards Technological Society** From 199s
Overhaul of all sciences, cosmic, terrestrial, biological and sub-atomic.
DNA and the Human Genome.
The Quantum Age.
The quantum computer and Artificial intelligence (AI).

The Scientific Revolution

The scientific revolution need not detain us much. It enabled the Technological Revolution, It changed the direction of civilisation, and of evolution. as a result Man's destiny lies in a Brave New World. Suffice it we recall the main stages:

Frist, we need to give credit to Aristotle. At a time of the first full emergence of thinking man, he defined the key intellectual fields as we have them even today: He has been called (a) the father of metaphysics, (b) the father of science, (c) the father of logic, and (d) the father of philosophy – the last meaning the desirable “way of life” of Man It was he who conceptualised the existence of a Prime Mover.

Critical Historical Transition

Up to the 15th century, the Christian world-view dominated Western civilisation, its divine foundations re-enforced by Aristotle's concept of a Prime Mover, and its theology elaborately prescribing the Purpose of Man, the moral laws and the justice system governing his behaviour. As human-nature would have it, the church over-did it. With vast possessions, it became powerful, over-extended its role in the social and political domains, and intolerant. Meanwhile, the world started to acquire surplus wealth, grow affluent, and nurture a growing intelligentsia and middle-class.

The reaction set in with the Renaissance on three fronts , within the church itself with the Protestant movement, in the birth of the Scientific Revolution, and by new (a-theistic if you like) searches for the meaning of things and philosophy of life.

Scientific Revolution (16-17th Century))

There began a profound transformation in western thought that replaced medieval and ancient views of nature with modern, evidence-based science.

- . - **Astronomy** : Shifted from the Earth-centered (geocentric) Ptolemaic model to the Sun-centered (heliocentric) model. Nicolaus Copernicus proposed heliocentrism in 1543, Johannes Kepler proved planets move in elliptical orbits, and Galileo Galilei used the telescope to observe moons and planetary phases.
- . - **Physics and Mechanics** : Unified terrestrial and celestial motion. Sir Isaac Newton published the *Philosophiae Naturalis Principia Mathematica* in 1687, detailing the three laws of motion and the law of gravitation applicable to the whole universe.
- . - **Anatomy and Medicine** : Replaced ancient assumptions with direct physical observation. Andreas Vesalius mapped human anatomy through actual dissection, while William Harvey accurately described the circulation of blood and the heart's function.
- . - **Chemistry and Boyle's Work** : Evolved out of alchemy into an experimental science, pioneered by Robert Boyle, who studied gas pressures and elements.

Scientific Revolution (18th Century))

During the 18th century, science shifted from a series of revolutionary breakthroughs by isolated geniuses to an organized, systematic exploration of the natural world.

- . - **The Chemical Revolution** : This period marked the birth of modern chemistry. Antoine Lavoisier proved the role of oxygen in burning and respiration, and established the law of conservation of mass.
- . - **Natural History and Taxonomy** : As global exploration expanded, scientists sought to organize the massive influx of new biological data. Carl Linnaeus developed the binomial nomenclature system (genus and species), creating a universal framework for classifying plants and animals.
- . - **Continental Newtonianism** : Mathematicians like Leonhard Euler and physicists like Émilie du Châtelet translated and advanced Newtonian mechanics into calculus-based physics.
- . - **The Study of Electricity** : The 18th century saw the first systematic investigations into electricity. Luigi Galvani and Alessandro Volta discovered bioelectricity and invented the first chemical battery (the Voltaic pile), respectively.

Scientific Revolution (19th Century))

The 19th-century Scientific Revolution, referred to by historians as the Second Scientific Revolution, transformed science from a collection of isolated "natural philosophies" into a highly institutionalised, mathematical, and unified professional enterprise.

- . - **The Electromagnetic & Thermodynamic Strand (Physics).**
James Clerk Maxwell formulated the Electromagnetic Field Theory demonstrating that electricity, magnetism, and light are all manifestations of the same electromagnetic field.
Lord Kelvin and Rudolf Clausius established the laws of conservation of energy and entropy, altering physics, engineering, and geology.
- . - **The Darwinian Evolution Strand (Biology & Medicine)**
Evolution by Natural Selection: Published by Charles Darwin in 1859, *The Origin of Species* completely overturned natural history. It provided a strictly empirical, non-theological explanation for the diversity of life on Earth.
- . - **Germ Theory of Disease:** Driven by **Louis Pasteur** and **Robert Koch**, this strand It proved that microscopic pathogens cause specific illnesses, giving birth to modern public health, antiseptics, and immunization.

. - The Atomic & Structural Strand (Chemistry)

The Periodic Table: In 1869, Dmitri Mendeleev organized known chemical elements into the Periodic Table.

. - The Non-Euclidean & Abstract Strand (Mathematics)

New Geometries: Mathematicians like Carl Friedrich Gauss and Bernhard Riemann broke past 2,000 years of Euclidean geometry, developing non-Euclidean concepts that later enabled Einstein's theory of relativity.

Mathematical Logic: George Boole introduced Boolean algebra, creating a mathematical system for logic that laid the theoretical foundations for computing.

Scientific Revolution (20th Century) .

Driven by existential global conflicts and advanced technological tools, this era transformed science from an individualised pursuit into a highly institutionalised, state-funded mega-industry known as "Big Science" .

. - The Subatomic and Relativistic Physics

Physics underwent a double paradigm shift that dismantled classical notions of absolute time, space, and certainty.

Relativity: Albert Einstein's special (1905) and general (1915) theories unified space and time into a flexible four-dimensional spacetime fabric, redefining gravity not as a direct force but as the curvature of space caused by mass.

. - **Quantum Mechanics:** Pioneers like Max Planck, Niels Bohr, and Werner Heisenberg proved that at the subatomic level, nature behaves probabilistically rather than deterministically.

. - **Cosmology:** Edwin Hubble's 1929 discovery of an expanding universe, followed by the formulation of the Big Bang Theory, shifted astronomy from mapping a static sky to charting a dynamic, evolving universe.

. - The Molecular Biology and Genetics

The DNA Revolution: James Watson, Francis Crick, and Rosalind Franklin decoded the double-helix structure of DNA in 1953. This shifted biology toward molecular information .

Biomedical Engineering & Genetics: The latter half of the century saw the birth of recombinant DNA technology (genetic engineering), culminating in the Human Genome Project.

. - The Information and Computational Science

The birth of digital computing created a brand-new medium for analysing data, altering how all other sciences operate. The creation of the programmable computer shifted mathematics and physics toward computation. Scientists began modelling complex networks—such as the human brain, ecosystems, and weather—laying the foundations for information theory and artificial intelligence.

. - The Planetary Dynamics (Earth Sciences)

Plate Tectonics: The acceptance of continental drift and plate tectonics in the 1960s unified earthquakes, volcanism, and fossil distributions into a single comprehensive model.

The Global Society - Completing The Third Turning Point

Mankind achieved global civilisation after the Second World War. The unification of countries, even imperfectly, marked the close of the Second Turning Point which began with the Modern States in the 15th Century, and the beginning of the Third Turning Point.

After two world wars and conquest of the virulent racist ideologies of fascism and nazism, the majority of countries formed a workable United Nations Organisation (UN) on 25 oct 1945. They went on to adopt the Universal Declaration of Human Rights on 10 Dec 1948. For the first time, all mankind agreed and defined the individual to be the primary constituent of society, with inalienable rights.

Besides security, health, education, care and well-being, these included freedom of choice, speech and religion.

Secure in these common objectives, we have gone on to build a Global Society, founded as it turned out on technology. It was the Scientific Revolution that made possible both the Global Society and laid the foundations of the Technological Society we are building.

Technological Society - Toward The Third Turning Point

This third phase is becoming a Technological Society. Initially, it has been dominated by the Technical revolution, the direct application of the sciences for the improvement of the environment. The terminal objective has been mastery of the planet. This has been substantially achieved. Today, we have physical control and management of our environment, except for volcanoes, the climate, and our co-earthlings the viruses.. We can fly, and have even been to the Moon.

Mankind's technological ascent took off with the seminal ideas of Max Planck(1900) in his Quantum Mechanics and Albert Einstein in his Theories of Special and Relativity Theory (1905-15). They have been the foundations of mankind's understanding of the underlying physics of all matter in the universe, and the basis of all technology.

Technology is, in effect, the creation of an environment enabling Man to live increasingly on the mental-plane. The greatest transformation been has been creation of the Digital Network overlaying the planet, through electronics and computerisation. This has enabled Man to become an information-based civilisation, the next step to becoming a Knowledge Society..

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Information Age (IT)

The first semi-conductor transistor was invented in 1947 ³⁷. It gave us the ability to switch on-off (control) a single pulse of electrical energy through a logic-gate, the basis of all electronics. And, the first integrated circuit (IC) of logic-gates, or "microchip", was invented in 1959-60. It began the Digital age, the ability to computerise.

Personal Computers

The Intel 4004 in 1971 was the first "computer on a chip," putting the CPU, memory, and logic on a single chip or "microprocessor". In 1981, IBM released the IBM-PC, establishing the microcomputer. This launched generations of desktops, laptops, notebooks and iPads as single-user IT devices.

Quantum physics also redefined the Marconi era wireless processes in a new electromagnetic wave theory, and made possible all the telecommunications that modern technology employs today. We need hardly mention the radio, TV and smartphone that most commonly serve the individual human.

Mainframes

The first computer (ENIAC) was invented in 1943, comprising 18,000 electrical valves. Subsequent development of mainframes was fuelled by the digital computer. The IBM System/370 in 1970 was the first, and IBM's Model 3090 mainframe in 1986 was the first to use a 1-megabit memory chip.

Most of the world's massively standalone operations are today run on mainframes. The current front-runner the IBM Model z Series runs on up to some 200 physical processors (chips) delivering speeds of up to 18,999 MIPS (millions of instructions per second), often linked together. Needless to say, there have been various lesser midi and mini computers serving more limited purposes.

³⁷ - Transistors are fundamental semiconductor devices that act as tiny electrical switches or amplifiers. They control the flow of electricity in electronic circuits, switching or regulating power to make modern devices function. Primarily made of materials like silicon, they are the building blocks of microchips in computers, phones, and almost all electronic equipment.

Internet

On the systems side, the great development has been the Internet. The Internet's official birthday was January 1, 1983, when the ARPANET network adopted the foundational Transmission Control Protocol/Internet Protocol (TCP/IP) to link independent networks together. This allowed disparate computer networks to communicate. In 1985, Windows was launched, and In 1989, the World Wide Web was invented at CERN and introduced. This system of websites and links made the underlying network infrastructure easily accessible to the general public.

The Internet is the single most important invention that has made it possible for information to be accessible to all, for every person on this planet to communicate with every other, and the human race to operate as a global society.

Handphones

The world's first handheld mobile phone was demonstrated by Motorola on April 3, 1973. and launched to the public in 1984. The IBM Simon Personal Communicator, the first "smartphone," went on sale in 1994. It featured a touchscreen, email capabilities, and built-in apps like a calculator and calendar. The first modern smartphone, the original Apple iPhone, was released in 2007 and revolutionised the market with a multi-touch interface and a full web browser.

Software

Equally phenomenal has been the development of software. Man is as dependent on software as he is on his hands. It is accumulative. There are standard software(s) like Operating Systems, and there are Application packages galore; and there are Search Engines and Artificial Intelligence (AI) programmes; and there are programmes for specific purposes and equipment. And there are generations of each.

Super-Computers

One line of human advancement has been the "supercomputer". The idea was to have a heavy crunching machine dedicated to modelling and processing large-scale problems to produce specific results or forecasts, requiring raw computational speeds far exceeding the capability of the mainframes of the time.

On a day to day basis, International institutions use supercomputers to model, monitor and forecast the world economy, epidemics, climate, security and defence, etc., and governments do the equivalent for countries. Supercomputers take on a vast array of research projects institutionally or on a contract basis.

The Cray-1 in 1976 followed by the Cray-2 in 1985 were the earliest generation, with four processors. The IBM Blue Gene Q in 2011 grew to 4096 nodes (processors), with 65,536 cores, delivering 677 TeraFlops. Today the king is the El Capitan, a Hewlett-Packard-AMD combination, which features 1,051,392 CPU cores paired with 9,988,224 accelerator/GPU cores, totalling over 11 million computing cores, delivering a speed of 1,809 Petaflops – I think they lost count of the number of processors!. It is no pushover. El Capitan takes up two tennis courts!

The supercomputer represents the maturity of "classical" or digital computing enabling man to have complete mastery of the planet and the world function as a Global Society

Achievements So Far

In the Knowledge sphere

We have united and institutionalised our efforts, achieving a collective mountain of knowledge

- .- In the physical sciences, we understand matter from the sub atomic to the cosmos.
- .- In the biological sciences, we understand evolution and living organisms, from microbes up
- .- In the psychological and sociological sciences, we have studied individual and social behaviour,
- .- In the "earth sciences", we have studied the complete Earth history and anthropology of man

In the Technology sphere

- With the computer, the internet and telecommunications, we have transformed mankind into an integrated society, functioning globally as one.
- We have substantially mastered our living environment (except the climate)
- We have conquered the air, the sea and space
- We have mechanised, automated and robotised our work process and food production

Our individual technological feats include sending a human to the Moon (twice), sending out the two Voyagers, the Hubble Space Telescope in 1990, and robot-mapping the surface of Mars. The European Space Agency (ESA) 's astrometry spacecraft (satellite) Gaia has already mapped and catalogued 1,7 billion stars in and around the Milky Way, and the James Webb Space Telescope (JWST), launched in 2021, is currently looking at the universe some 200 light years from the big bang.

On 30 August 2026, NASA launched the Nancy Grace Roman Space Telescope, with a field of view potentially measuring light from a billion galaxies in its lifetime. The observatory will orbit the Sun-Earth Lagrange point L2. This observatory will complete a statistical census of planetary systems in our galaxy, and settle essential questions in the areas of dark energy, exoplanets, and infrared astrophysics.

At the small end of things, our instrumentation includes the Electron Transmission Microscope (TEM), with resolutions in the picometer range (12 sub-zeros) . These titans of technology have enabled us to exploit the behaviour of the ultimate particles of matter - down to absolute zero or the complete absence of heat and energy.

We have 620 nuclear reactors supplying energy all round the world. We are on the point of launching fusion reactors, replicating the even more powerful process of nucleosynthesis that fuelled the primeval expansion of the cosmos and provides the energy of the stars.

In the Biological sphere

An equal revolution has taken place in biology and biotechnology. We know the complete architecture of a virus. We can trace our heredity through DNA to our first common ancestors. Technically, we are near to be able to clone ourselves. In biotechnology, scientists are talking of nanomedicine, ie diagnosing and delivering medication at nano levels even possibly using nano robot doctors.

The Information Society

The development of the Information Technology (IT) is perhaps the most profound directional change to evolution brought about by technology. As a result, our planet is managed as an information-based environment and Homo Sapiens have evolved into an Information Society.

A typical human today is a knowledge-worker. He is highly "instrumentalised" even in his daily life, checking his smartphone or computer, or interacting with a robot or his car. All automated functions are information based.

We have now multiplied our memory banks zillionfold. The world's libraries and transactional records are substantially digitised, enlarging our span of the understandable. There are mountains of information and their related data-sets, so much so that "search and retrieval" software has now become our primary working tool.

All the information can be downloaded by anyone with a smartphone. This enables us, collectively and individually, to decide more efficiently with wider spans of knowledge, and think further in depth in the abstract. If anything, we have a new disease called "mis-information".

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The Quantum Age³⁸

All said and done, the processing of information using semiconductor logic gates ad Infinitum is old hat.. In digital computing, processing power increases proportionately with additional capacity.

In quantum computing, however, processing power increases exponentially. Thus, tripling a 100 qubit chip, will not increase capacity, as conventionally, to $100 \times 3 = 300$ qubits, but to $100^3 = 1,000,000$ times; and a fourth increase (quadrupling) will take us to 100 million times. As a species, we are therefore looking at a **quantum leap** of a colossal scale, acquiring unimagined additional processing power. But first, we need to get the quantum commuter working properly.

The study of physics at small scales has revealed a surprising new world of natural laws. Scientists have sought to take advantage of this new level of knowledge. Quantum computers specifically harness these phenomena to enable mathematical methods of solving problems not available with classical computing. Quantum computers can give structure to data and help discover patterns that classical algorithms alone might miss or take far too long.

Quantum Computing

Just as the classical computer establishes a controlled space in a semiconductor chip called a "bit" which can exist in a state of 1 or 0 using an electronic pulse, the quantum computer establishes a controlled space or environment called a "qubit" in a quantum chip or processor with the same features.

In the quantum environment, however, the qubit can exist in a multiple of dimensions of itself known as suppositions (each of 2 states) eg. $2a$, $2a^2$, $2a^n$, each of which can be independently manipulated. Doubling the number of qubits increases the available states exponentially.

A qubit will hold (and process) all the states of all suppositions active at any one time as instructed, but on termination (or "interference" also known as "measurement") it will fall into its binary state of the moment, which is the result.

Quantum qubits share other features. most importantly entanglements. It is possible for qubits to be entangled so that changes in one change the other. This facilitates and extends the range of calculations.

Kinds Of Quantum Qubits

Like traditional or "classical" computers, quantum computers build or host their qubits on semiconductor chips, but in different ways depending on the technology used.

By firing microwave photons at these qubits, scientists can control their state and behaviour, and read out information.

. 1 Superconducting Qubits: The more common (used by IBM), which build qubits by etching superconducting³⁹ circuits onto silicon chips.

.2 Silicon Spin Qubits: These are built directly on standard silicon wafers used for everyday smartphone and laptop processors. They trap individual electrons on the chip to use as qubits.

.3 Trapped-Ion Qubits: A trapped-ion quantum computer (TIQC) is one in which ions or charged atomic particles can be confined and suspended in free space using electromagnetic fields as qubits.

³⁸ - <https://www.ibm.com/think/topics/quantum-computing>

³⁹ _

Superconductors are materials where electrical resistance vanishes and magnetic forces are expelled from the material. An electric current can pass through a superconductor wire indefinitely with no power source.

These quantum computers do not build qubits *on* a chip. They use lasers or magnetic fields that trap and manipulate individual atoms floating in a vacuum chamber.

.4 Neutral-Atom Qubits. A neutral atom qubit shares features with the trapped--ion qubit, but using a magneto-optical trap.

. 5 Topological Qubits Some companies (like Microsoft) build topological qubits, ie.by tiling custom materials together.

Qubits must be kept in a specialised dilution refrigerator at temperatures near absolute zero. A single quantum chip (or Quantum Processing Unit) doesn't just hold one qubit; it contains an array of many qubits, control wiring, and resonators.

Present Technical imitations

NISQ stands for **Noisy Intermediate-Scale Quantum**. It refers to the current generation of quantum computers, which still lack the quantum error correction necessary for fault-tolerant large-scale calculations. The bigger the number of qubits, the more "noise".

Quantum decoherence is the process by which a quantum system loses its unique quantum properties. Quantum computers rely on qubits staying in a delicate state of superposition to perform complex calculations. However, stray photons, air molecules, and temperature fluctuations constantly interact with the delicate synchronised wave patterns of the quantum system, forcing it into a single, definite "classical" state.

Quantum decoherence is the primary hurdle in building stable, scalable quantum computers
Physicists use quantum error-correction techniques to preserve coherence for as long as possible.

Decoherence provides a physical explanation for why we do not see large, everyday objects (like cats, chairs, or cars) existing in multiple states at once. It effectively "averages out" the quantum probabilities into singular, definitive classical realities. It is frequently compared to pouring a drop of concentrated red ink into a vast ocean: the pigment quickly disperses into the background, and its distinct, localized colour is lost to the environment.

Probabilistic Nature of Information

While traditional computers commonly provide singular answers, quantum machines often provide probabilistic answers, ie. ranges of possible answers. This might make quantum computing seem less precise. However, for the kinds of incredibly complex problems quantum computers might soon solve, this way of computing might potentially save hundreds of thousands of years of traditional computation.

Quantum Computing Breakthroughs

The quantum computer is the child ad argo of the 21 century. The first to go on the market was the 128 qubit D-Wave One, by D-Wave Systems in 2011. There now some ten companies in the field, led by IBM. The current lead is Atomic Company at 1200 qubits.

Experts believe that to solve real-world problems that classical computers cannot, a quantum computer should have at least 1,000 qubits or more.

IBM's largest physical quantum processor is the Condor, featuring 1,123 qubits. the highest individual qubit count on a single chip, Its Roadmap targets 2000 qubits running 1 billion gates, by 2033.

When I reviewed this nascent subject in 2019-2020, I wrote this forecast. I have no reason to change it yet.⁴⁰

⁴⁰ - "Quantum Mechanics", SBN: 978-981-14-9875-6 (e-book), at <https://geraldpillay.com/>

“As we begin the 2030s, there should be significant sectoral spin-offs in telecommunications, biomedicine, health, chemicals and pharmaceuticals, materials development, security, and scientific research. There could be some breakthrough in the Internet of Things (IoT). The US will, I am sure, hope for a better electoral voting system.”

If we achieve the preceding, there would not be reason not to project 100% a year straight-line in qubits growth of the 10,000 in 2030 to 60,000 as we move to 2035. At that point we would be close to if not achieving full Quantum Advantage, going by the NAS' projected target of 65,536 qubits.

We should see some in-depth applications, like giving sight to the blind, and eliminating the pandemics and perhaps mental degeneration, and advances in AI, besides spectacular industrial, engineering and other advances. We can allow up to 2040 for this phase, with the qubit chips increasing to 100,000.”

DNA computing

DNA computing and quantum computing represent two revolutionary non-classical paradigms. Both aim to solve problems intractable for traditional computers, but they use entirely different mechanisms.

DNA computing relies on biological processes like DNA hybridisation and ligation. Trillions of DNA strands act as potential solutions in a test tube, allowing for a massively parallel search of solution spaces. The correct answers are filtered out using biological enzymes.

Instead of the binary alphabet (1 and 0), DNA computers rely on the four-letter genetic alphabet of DNA: **Adenine (A), Guanine (G), Cytosine (C), and Thymine (T)**. Information is encoded by synthesising custom strands of DNA with specific sequences of these bases.

Calculations are performed through biochemical reactions, such as the natural pairwise sticking (hybridization) of complementary DNA strands (where A naturally binds to T, and C binds to G).

By controlling external conditions like temperature or adding specific enzymes, biological algorithms manipulate the DNA strands to find solutions to problems.

Innovations in DNA computing structures are enabling interpretable, scalable decision-making and programmable gate arrays, achieving dozens of gate-level circuits to minimise molecular interference.

DNA computing is slower per reaction, but can handle massive volume (trillions of operations simultaneously in a single vessel), optimally used in searching large combinatorial problems (eg. cryptographic, biological, or routing data). It is unmatched for data storage (1 gram of DNA can theoretically store between (215\))petabytes and (460) exabytes of data. DNA computing is excellent at running massively parallel calculations.

Rather than competing, these two fields are increasingly viewed as complementary. Researchers are exploring quantum-DNA computing to combine the storage capabilities of DNA with the processing speed of quantum circuits. At this stage it is an adjunct technology, with an enormous future, and we shall not mention it independently hereon.

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Artificial Intelligence

With Artificial Intelligence (AI) programming, coupled to our supercomputers, we already can interrogate our data resources to greater layers and spans of intensity, and model and simulate physical, biological and sociological systems. The potential of combining AI and quantum computing is again mind-blowing, and represents the next generation and level of the human quest for knowledge.

What is AI

Mechanisation, automation and robotisation are forms of designed human intelligence. So too is all software. These have been going on since the 1950s.

Artificial intelligence (AI) is however another kettle of fish. It is technology that enables computers and machines to simulate human learning, comprehension, problem solving, decision making, creativity and **autonomy**. They enable machines to ingest data and operate, learn, or predict outcomes **on their own**.

Applications and devices equipped with AI can see and identify objects and understand and respond to human language. They can learn from new information and experience. They can make detailed recommendations. They can act independently, replacing the need for human intelligence or intervention (a classic example being a self-driving car)

AI can also be designed as simpler common-user applications, as tools for information searches, and for other specific tasks. The most popular is ChatGPT, created by OpenAI, a general-purpose assistant used for answering questions, generating text, coding assistance, and image generation. At a deeper end, AI is used to explore new ideas, synthesise data trends, and solve problems.

Since 2024, AI researchers and practitioners have developed generative AI (gen AI), a technology that can create original text, images, video and other content, multi-communicate with humans.

Current Stage of AI Development

Besides the open-source user tools, AI has dramatically transformed our operation, control and study of the world in just a quarter of a century, see some of the frontiers below:

Economy

- AI is extensively used for financial and stock-market forecasting. Institutional investors, hedge funds, and trading platforms use advanced machine learning models to analyse vast datasets and execute trades at speeds and accuracies impossible for humans.
- Banks and financial institutions rely on AI to flag anomalous patterns in real-time, preventing unauthorized purchases and securing accounts.
- Logistics companies (such as UPS) use AI to calculate the most efficient delivery routes, saving millions of gallons of fuel annually.
 - Social media networks use predictive AI to target consumers
- It is also the foundational technology driving early-stage autonomous vehicle

Defence and National Security

- AI is heavily used in defence and national security, revolutionising how nations protect themselves. AI systems process massive amounts of raw data—such as satellite imagery, audio intercepts, and global social media traffic—far faster than human analysts can. This enables pattern recognition for border protection and counter-terrorism.
- Machine learning powers unmanned aerial vehicles (UAVs) and robotic systems, allowing them to patrol remote border areas and coordinate complex manoeuvres (such as drone swarms) with minimal human intervention
- AI is a vital tool for active cybersecurity, especially in military networks. It continuously monitors network traffic to detect anomalies, automate real-time incident responses, and counter zero-day cyberattacks.

Biology and Medicine

- The applications of AI in biology are reshaping healthcare, agriculture, and our fundamental understanding of life.
- AI models can accurately predict the complex 3D shapes of proteins based on their amino acid sequences in minutes. Scientists use generative AI to design completely novel proteins and synthetic enzymes from scratch
 - AI can analyse millions of chemical compounds to see which ones will bind to specific disease-causing proteins, massively cutting down the years it takes to discover a new drug.
- AI algorithms quickly process vast amounts of raw genomic data to identify disease-causing mutations and genetic predispositions.
- Researchers use large language models and other neural networks to understand entire biological systems. This allows them to predict how two or more genes interact to cause disease or engineer cells to produce specific functional outputs.
- AI enables the discovery and generation of synthetic genetic sequences that can activate genes in highly specific tissues, bypassing the need for trial-and-error in biotechnology.

. AI is the backbone of bioinformatics , the interdisciplinary field that combines biology, computer science, mathematics, and statistics to analyse and interpret complex biological data.

Climate

.- AI is actively revolutionising climate science by enhancing predictive accuracy and accelerating simulations. Instead of just calculating mathematical equations, machine learning models analyse decades of historical data to spot complex patterns, allowing scientists to run climate scenarios and weather forecasts much faster than ever before..

Where Can AI-quantum Take Us?

With Artificial Intelligence (AI) married to a quantum computer we shall be able to re-write quantum mechanics and GPS the Milky Way (at least), and when we get there whatever else we shall see from there. We need to break the time-barrier or we have no future In space.

AI-quantum computer is the key to modelling the human body, the last step in mastering ourselves. Besides perfect health, we could “tailor” our physical selves, perhaps even our behavioural personalities – engineer ourselves to moral perfectibility. And naturally, we would want to live longer. .Whether we can re-engineer biology to remove senescence will be of paramount importance.

At the deep end, AI is a quantum leap, potentially a step In evolution towards creating an artificial human brain. The objective is to “see” further than the human brain.

And finally, there is the question whether AI-quantum will help us answer the Metaphysical issues. This might or might not solve any problems or desires of human immortality.

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Technological Man – Completing Turning Point Four

When we are close to achieving the preceding third stage, Man shall have become the Technological Man. Man will be totally dependent on his technological environment, life-support technologies and information systems. He will have vastly Improved technological tools and mental capacity to enquire. He will have better biological protection and better health, body improvements and increasing longevity. There will be extensive robotisation, expanding further Man’s physical capabilities, and increasing his leisure.

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Towards The Knowledge Society

During phase four, Technological Man will (should) progress (evolve) further to becoming (for want of a better term) a Knowledge Turning Point Five is terminal; it is when Man knows and can choose his Destiny. That would represent the fulfilment of evolution - why it started in the first place – in relation to Man.

At this stage, Man would be working mainly with knowledge to hand. He should have covered all the essential grounds of enquiry with his new AI-quantum computer range

Man will be massively more knowledge accessible. He would have quantum increases in his scale of comprehension of what there is. The Beyond Materiality domains would be more readable, and conclusions about the Metaphysical issues more perceivable. He would at this stage understand his destiny and it options, whether on this planet or somewhere else.

There will be universally agreed scales of ethics and morality, and humans will increasingly aspire to be virtues.. He will (hopefully) become increasingly perfect or self-managed.. He will probably be in space, if not partially settled there. With nothing but leisure, Man will be left with the “Metaphysical

issues", if he has not solved them by then. His destiny will be his main pre-occupation. Individuals may cross the finishing line on an individual basis.

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Chapter Eight

Outcome of Religious Review

The Metaphysical Issues

In the traditional view of metaphysics contemplating the world beyond immediate reality by use of abstract thinking invariably kicks off with consideration of Aristotle's Prime Mover, which set I call the "Metaphysical issues, also the "God-option" **This chapter seeks to learn what religions have to say about the God option.**

There is no harm in re-stating the Metaphysical issues here: (A) Is there a Prime Mover or Supreme Being? (B) Did He originate (create) the universe and Man? and (C) Did he lay down the Purpose (or mission) of Man, the latter's obligations and his destiny?

If the first is proved or accepted or believed in, it admits for consideration that he was the author of the second, from which it follows he prescribed the third. If the first is not proved or believed to exist, the second and third become "Non-theistic Metaphysical Issues" deserving attention in their own right.

The Metaphysical issues are validly derive from mankind's intuitive and historical understandings and beliefs, which have served as his intellectual and emotional fulcrums and given coherence to societal development from his first emergence.

It turns out the only reality we have of these issues is in the religious experience of humans and the various religious world-views of a higher entity and the Purpose of Man.

Targeting the Religious Domain

The study accordingly decided to review the philosophic-religious development of our major civilisations. We have chosen the historical thread to give depth and connectivity. .

If we cannot prove or continue to believe in the Metaphysical issues, or that a Prime Mover is not a realistic notion, it is incumbent on us to visualise an alternative pathway and destiny for Man, whether in space or terrestrially. Our review includes Communist China, which is precisely such a **volte-face** or alternative path being pursued by contemporary society.

Our review earlier covered the major religions in the following historical order : (1) Mithridatic-Zoroastrian tradition, (2) Mesopotamian-Abrahamic cultural traditions, (3) the Indian cultural heritage, and the (4) Chinese traditional culture followed by Communist China.

Findings

We confine our interest to finding the **God-option** or equivalence in the religions. We have re-grouped our findings as follows for greater coherence:

- . (1) The Early Monotheistic religions
- . (2) The Transcendent-Monotheistic religions
- . (3) The Revealed religions

For each we report on the core Metaphysical issues as follows: (a) the Supreme Being and (b) the Purpose of Man, in sequence of their depth of contact with the subject matter.

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The Early Monotheistic religions

Pre-Historical Note: (optional reading)

The religions of Iran and India are both thought to have originated from the **Vedic religion** of the Indo-Aryans of Central Asia.

The Indo-Iranians and their expansion are strongly associated with the Proto-Indo-European invention of the chariot. This expansion spread from their homeland north of the Caspian Sea south, inter alia, Central Asia, the Iranian plateau and the Indian sub-continent

The Vedic religion has roots in the Indo-Iranian culture and religion of the Sintashta (2200–1750 BCE) and Andronovo (2000–1150 BCE) cultures of the Eurasian Steppe. This Indo-Iranian culture branched into the Indo-Aryan culture and borrowed distinctive religious beliefs and practices from the non-Indo-Aryan Bactria-Margiana culture (2250–1700 BCE) of south of Central Asia enroute in the early 2nd millennium BCE, as they migrated to India (1500 BCE)

The branch of the Indo-Iranians that settled on the Iranian plateau, the Proto-Iranians, diverged from their Indo-Aryan kin in Central Asia during the 2nd millennium BC, and became the Medes, Persians and Pathans.

The original Vedic religion worshiped gods tied to natural forces, such as Indra (storm/war), Agni (fire), and Surya (sun). They performed complex fire sacrifices (yajna) to maintain cosmic order and secure divine favour. Social stratification laid early groundwork for the social class (varna) system.

While Hinduism and the Iranian religions became quite different, they shared many Vedic practices and deities in common. Vedic Sanskrit and ancient Avestan (the language of early Iranian scriptures) are closely related

The Mithridatic- Zoroastrian Tradition

Mithraism

Searches for the earliest monotheistic religion pointed to the possibility that it was Mithraism. This was the religion of the Medes. The Medes were an Indo-Iranian people (of the Indo-Aryans were a branch) who, around the end of the 2nd millennium BCE, migrated to northern and western Iran, establishing the kingdom of Media. It is likely they shared common Vedic traditions.

The Medes were later absorbed into the Achaemenid Empire by Cyrus II in about 550 BCE. The Medes were an Iron Age Iranian people.

Supreme Being

Mithraism was characterised by the worship of **Ahura Mazda** as the supreme deity and included other deities like Mithra and Anahita. The Medes were also associated with the Magi, who were a priestly tribe responsible for religious rituals and chants.

Mithra was revered as the god of covenants, light, justice, and contracts, and as a protector of truth and friendship. He was also the god of the sun, of the shining light that beholds everything. He was also the god of kings.

Purpose of Man

The cult of Mithras emphasised loyalty, the importance of vows, and the idea of the soul's journey to liberation. Mithraic rituals involved elaborate ceremonies held in underground caves, with seven initiatory grades representing different planets.

In the Roman Empire, Mithra became the central figure of a mystery cult, with his iconography and mythology evolving to incorporate Roman beliefs. He lost any monotheistic identity by then. Mithras was honoured as the patron of loyalty to the emperor. After the acceptance of Christianity by the emperor Constantine in the early 4th century, Mithraism rapidly declined

Zoroastrianism

Zarathustra, also known as Zoroaster, lived around the 6th century BCE, and founded Zoroastrianism, a monotheistic religion that emphasised the worship of one god, Ahura Mazda, and the cosmic conflict between good and evil. Zoroaster was probably a priest who experienced a vision from Ahura Mazda who appointed him to preach the truth.

Zoroaster, born into a noble family, was part of a Vedic tradition similar to Hinduism. The revelation from Ahura Mazda led him to reject the existing polytheistic beliefs and embrace the concept of a single, all-powerful god. Ahura Mazda already as a Mede god.

Supreme Being

In Zoroastrianism, also called Mazdayasnā, Ahura Mazda occupied the centre of a kingdom of justice that promised immortality and bliss.

Its adherents exalt an uncreated, omniscient, omnipotent, and all wise deity, who is hailed as the supreme being of the universe. He is the benevolent God who has created the spiritual and material existences out of infinite light, and maintains the cosmic law of Asha..

Opposed to Ahura Mazda is Angra Manyu, who is personified as a destructive spirit and the adversary of all things that are good. Angra Mainyu is not a creation of Ahura Mazda but an independent entity. It is a dualistic cosmology of good and evil, with an eschatological outlook predicting the ultimate triumph of good.

Zoroastrians treat Ahura Mazda as the supreme god, but believe in lesser divinities known as Yazatas, who share some similarities with the angels in Abrahamic religions.

Purpose of Man

Zoroaster's teachings emphasised the importance of good thoughts, words, and deeds, and the need to align oneself with Ahura Mazda by living a virtuous life.

Zoroastrian doctrine holds that, within this cosmic dichotomy, human beings have the choice between Asha (truth, cosmic order), the principle of righteousness, or falsehood and deceit, the essential nature of Angra Mainyu that expresses itself as greed, wrath, and envy.

Zoroaster's teachings became the state religion of the Achaemenid and Parthian Empires. The Achaemenid empire formalised and institutionalised many of its tenets and rituals, and the Sassanid empire revitalised the faith. It was superseded in time by Islam.

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Chinese Traditional Culture

Supreme Being

Chinese civilisation began when, in about 2070 BCE in the Bronze age, the Yellow Emperor founded the Chou dynasty in the Yellow River valley, near Henan.

The Yellow Emperor was also known as the Yellow Thearch and by his Chinese name Huangdi. He is included among the legendary Three Sovereigns and Five Emperors. He is revered as a deity individually or as part of the Five Regions Highest Deities in Chinese folk religion.

And, until 1912, the longest period of continuous history, he occupied that position. All chiefs, kings and emperors who ruled the countless territorial grouping that made up China across the vast extent of their land over the four millennia of their time-span, given their warring fortunes, invoked the Mandate of Heaven as their authority to do so.

Chinese theology is fundamentally monistic, that is to say it sees the world and the gods of its phenomena as an organic whole, or cosmos, which continuously emerges from a simple principle. The universal principle that gives origin to the world is conceived as transcendent and immanent to creation.

This is expressed by the concept that "all things have one and the same principle". This principle is commonly referred to as Tian, a concept generally translated as "Heaven", referring to the northern culmen and starry vault of the skies and its natural laws which regulate earthly phenomena and generate beings as their progenitors.

There are no rationalising metaphysics. The above beliefs are the profound conviction inherited through the culture of the of the people.

Ancestors are regarded as the equivalent of Heaven within human society, and therefore as the means connecting back to Heaven which is the "utmost ancestral father".

The Chinese idea of the universal God is expressed in different ways. There are many names of God from the different sources of Chinese tradition, reflecting a "hierarchic, multi-perspective" observation of the supreme God.

Chinese tradition contains two facets of the idea of God: one is the personified God of popular devotion, and the other one is the impersonal God of philosophical inquiry. Together they express an "integrated definition of the monistic world".

Purpose of Man: Philosophy of Life

Taoism

Lao Tze @ Lao Tzu is a semi-legendary philosopher, born in the 6th century BCE, during the Spring and Autumn period, a contemporary of Confucius. He authored of the Tao Te Ching, the foundational text of Taoism.

Taoism or Daoism is conceived of as the natural way of the universe, it is seen through the actual living experience of one's everyday being. The concept is represented by the Chinese character, Tao, which has meanings including 'way', 'path', 'road', and sometimes 'doctrine' or 'principle'.

Taoism does not have a God. There is no omnipotent being beyond the cosmos, who created and controls the universe. In Taoism the universe springs from the Tao, and the Tao impersonally guides things.

The Tao Te Ching describes the Tao as the source and ideal of all existence: it is unseen, but not transcendent, immensely powerful yet supremely humble, being the root of all things. The Tao Te Ching intends to lead people to a "return" to their natural state, in harmony with Tao.

A common goal of Taoist practice is self-cultivation, a deeper appreciation of the Tao, and more harmonious existence. Taoist ethics emphasise such virtues as effortlessness, naturalness, simplicity, and the three treasures of compassion, frugality, and humility.

Confucianism

Confucianism is a system of thought and behaviour variously described as a tradition, philosophy, religion, a theory of government, or way of life. Confucianism developed from teachings of Confucius (551–479 BCE),

Confucius believed that the welfare of a country depended on the moral cultivation of its people, beginning from the nation's leadership. He believed that individuals could begin to cultivate an all-encompassing sense of virtue through **ren** and that the most basic step to cultivating ren was filial piety—primarily the devotion to one's parents and older siblings.

He taught that one's individual desires do not need to be suppressed, but that people should be educated to reconcile their desires via **li**, rituals and forms of propriety, through which people could demonstrate their respect for others and their responsible roles in society. Confucius also believed that a ruler's sense of **de** or 'virtue', was his primary prerequisite for leadership.

Confucianism rests upon the belief that human beings are fundamentally good, and teachable, improvable, and perfectible through personal and communal endeavour, especially self-cultivation and self-creation. Confucian thought focuses on the cultivation of virtue in a morally organised world.

With particular emphasis on the importance of the family and social harmony, the core of Confucianism is humanistic. Confucianism considers the ordinary activities of human life as sacred, because they are the expression of humanity's moral nature, which has a transcendent anchorage in Tian. The Confucian concept of Tian is primarily an impersonal absolute principle like the Tao or Brahman In Hinduism.

Some of the basic Confucian ethical concepts and practices include ren, yi, li, and zhi. Ren is the essence of the human being which manifests as compassion. It is the virtue-form of Heaven. Yi is the upholding of righteousness and the moral disposition to do good. Li is a system of ritual norms and propriety that determines how a person should properly act in everyday life in harmony with the law of Heaven. Zhi is the ability to see what is right and fair, or the converse, in the behaviors exhibited by others. Confucianism holds one in contempt, either passively or actively, for failure to uphold the cardinal moral values of ren and yi.

Proponents of religious Confucianism argue that despite the secular nature of Confucianism's teachings, it is based on a worldview that is religious. Confucius was considered more of a humanist than a spiritualist. His discussions on afterlife and views concerning Heaven remained indeterminate, and he is largely unconcerned with spiritual matters often considered essential to religious thought, such as the nature of souls.

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Transcendent-Monotheistic Religions

The Dharmatic Religions

Vedic roots

The mother of the Dharmatic religions was Hinduism, which had its roots in the Vedic religion of the Indo-Aryans who arrived around 1500 BCE. Early Vedic religion focused on an afterlife in the heavenly realms of the ancestors rather than cyclical rebirth. Brahmanism (with Supreme Being connotations) evolved on Indian soil at the turn of the millennium, with samsara and karma (cycle of re-birth or re-incarnation) following later from the 800s BCE, overlain by indigenous folk religions. From the mid 500s BCE, Hinduism consolidated with the subsequent Hindu Synthesis in their axial age.

The Dharmatic Religious Traditions

Jainism, Buddhism and Sikhism evolved from Hinduism, drawing heavily on samsara and karma, while Sikhism remained monotheism as well. : Buddhism and Jainism emerged in the 6th–5th centuries BCE as part of the broader ascetic (śramaṇa) tradition.)

These religions share a common foundation in the concept of dharma, which generally signifies righteousness, duty, or the natural order of things. While the specific interpretations of dharma vary across these religions, it remains a central principle guiding their practices and beliefs.

Dharma:

In Sanskrit, "dharma" means "that which sustains" or "the way things are." It encompasses concepts like righteousness, law, duty, and the natural order of the universe.

Hinduism:

Dharma in Hinduism is a complex concept, often linked to the cosmic order (Rta) and individual duties based on one's stage of life and social position.

Buddhism:

Dharma in Buddhism refers to the teachings of the Buddha and the ultimate truth about reality. It is one of the Three Jewels (Buddha, Dharma, Sangha).

Jainism:

Dharma in Jainism emphasizes the path of righteousness, moral transformation, and the teachings of the Tirthankaras.

Sikhism:

In Sikhism, dharma signifies the path of righteousness, proper religious practices, and fulfilling one's moral duties.

Hinduism

The Hindu synthesis involved a gradual process of incorporating elements from diverse traditions into what would become Hinduism, beginning from the axial age (500 BCE – 200 CE). This included:

- . **1 Incorporation of Sramana ideas:** Buddhist and Jain concepts like renunciation, karma, and liberation were integrated into the Hindu framework.
- . **2 Development of Bhakti:** The Bhakti movement, emphasising personal devotion to deities, also became a significant part of the synthesis.
- . **3 Assimilation of local deities:** Local deities and cults were assimilated into the larger Hindu pantheon, often identified with Vedic gods, and
- . **4 Influence of Smriti literature:** The Smriti texts, including the epics (like the Ramayana and Mahabharata) and Puranas, played a crucial role in codifying and popularizing these integrated beliefs and practices.

The Sramana traditions drove the so-called Hindu synthesis after the Vedic period. As it spread, this new Hinduism assimilated popular non-Vedic gods and other traditions from local cultures, and integrated societal divisions, called the caste system.

Prominent themes in Hindu beliefs include karma (action, intent and consequences), saṃsāra (the cycle of death and rebirth) and the four Puruṣārthas, proper goals or aims of human life, namely: dharma (ethics/duties), artha (prosperity/work), kama (desires/passions) and moksha (liberation/freedom from passions).

Supreme Being

A Hindu views the entire universe as God's and everything in the universe as God. Hindus believe that each person is intrinsically divine, and the purpose of life is to seek and realise the divinity within all of us. The Hindu belief is totally non-exclusive and accepts all other faiths and religious paths.

Brahma emerged in early Vedism around 1000 BCE. Initially, the abstract noun "brahman" meant sacred utterance or cosmic power. In the middle Vedic, "prajapati" (the lord of creatures) emerged as the supreme creator god of the sacrificial religion. Towards the end of the Vedic he merged with the philosophical concept of Brahman, giving birth to the personified creator deity.

Brahma is a Hindu god, referred to as "the Creator" within the Trimurti, the trinity of supreme divinity, that includes Vishnu and Shiva. He is associated with creation, knowledge, and the Vedas.

The Trimurti is a core concept in Hinduism representing the supreme divinity through three principal deities: Brahma the creator, Vishnu the preserver, and Shiva the destroyer – the last to clear the path for new creation, ensuring the continuous cycle of life and rebirth.

The triad reflects the philosophy that creation and destruction are not final ends, but steps in an endless, repeating universal cycle. The three gods are viewed as different functional forms or expressions of **Brahman**, the formless Ultimate Reality.

The **Om** symbol of Hinduism is considered to have an allusion to Trimurti, where the A, U, and M phonemes of the word are considered to indicate creation, preservation and destruction, adding up to represent Brahman.

The female counterparts or consorts of this trinity are Saraswati, Lakshmi, and Parvati, known collectively as the Tridevi. In time, the worship of Vishnu and Shiva became more dominant.

Early texts describe that there was nothing but an eternal ocean. From this, a golden egg emerged. The egg broke open and Brahma, who had created himself within it, came into existence. Then, he created the universe, the earth, and other things. He also created people to populate and live on his creation..

Purpose of Man

Most Hindus believe that humans are in a cycle of death and rebirth called **samsara**. When a person dies, their atman (soul) is reborn in a different body. Some believe rebirth happens directly at death, others believe that an atman may exist in other realms.

After death, the soul is reincarnated, taking birth in another physical body or form. Passing from one life to the next, each soul is on a journey of spiritual development facilitated in part by karma, the concept that every thought and action has a corresponding reaction.

In Hinduism the concept of Heaven and Hell exists alongside reincarnation. In Hinduism, Buddhism and Sikhism, this is the cycle of life, death and rebirth.

Hinduism is sometimes considered nontheistic because it emphasises following one's dharma, or duty, more than worshipping deities.

The jati (caste) system is a form of social stratification that divides people into hereditary social groups based on birth. These groups are often linked to traditional occupations and form a complex hierarchy within the larger varna system inherited from Vedic times.

The latter is a broader framework of four social classes (Brahmins, Kshatriyas, Vaishyas, and Shudras), while jatis are more specific and numerous, with thousands existing within the varna system. From the ordinary person's perspective, re-incarnation is advancing up the caste pecking order.

Jainism

Jainism was founded by a series of teachers or "Thahankara" (Supreme Preacher of Jainism), of whom Mahavira (599–527 BCE) in the Indian axial age was the 24th.

Jain cosmology

As in Buddhism and Hinduism, both time and the universe are eternal, but the universe is transient. The universe, body, matter and time are considered separate from the soul (jiva). Their interaction explains life, living, death and rebirth in Jain philosophy. The Jain cosmic universe has three parts, the upper, middle, and lower worlds.

Jainism states that Kāla (time) is without beginning and eternal; the cosmic wheel of time, rotates ceaselessly. Thus, it divides the worldly cycle of time into two half-cycles, ascending, with progressive

prosperity and happiness. and descending, with increasing sorrow and immorality. It states that the world is currently in the fifth ara (eon) full of sorrow and religious decline. After the sixth ara, the universe will be reawakened in a new cycle.

Supreme Being

Jainism shares the Hindu world-view of the universe, including re-incarnation.

Jains believe the universe is made up of six eternal substances: sentient beings or souls, non-sentient substance or matter, the principle of motion, the principle of rest, space, and time. The last five are united as the non-living.

Purpose of Man

The spiritual goal in Jainism is to reach **moksha** (liberation) for ascetics, but for most Jain laypersons, it is to accumulate good karma that leads to better rebirth and a step closer to liberation.

The purpose of Man is to attain enlightenment. The perfect enlightened souls with a body are called victors, and perfect souls without a body are called siddhas (liberated souls). The liberated beings are the supreme beings and are worshipped by all heavenly, earthly and hellish beings who aspire to attain liberation themselves.

The souls who live happily in the body of a heavenly celestial do so because of their positive karma. They possess a more transcendent knowledge about material things and can anticipate events in the human realms. However, once their past karmic merit is exhausted, their souls are reborn again as humans, animals or other beings.

Followers of Jainism take five main vows: non-violence, not lying, non-stealing, chastity, and non-possessiveness. Monks follow them completely whereas householders observe them partially. Self-discipline and ascetism are thus major focuses of Jainism.

Buddhism (Non-Theistic)

Siddhartha Gautama (563-483 BCE) was a wandering ascetic and religious teacher who founded Buddhism during India's axial age. He was a contemporary of Mahavira. Before his enlightenment, he practiced extreme asceticism similar to Jain traditions,

After six years of ascetic practice, Siddhartha attained full enlightenment or nirvana at the age of thirty five at Bodhi Gaya, in India. The Buddha then wandered through the lower Indo-Gangetic Plain teaching his beliefs.

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He died at the age of eighty in India. Buddhist tradition holds he died in Kushinagar and reached parinirvana ("final release from conditioned existence"). After his death, he came to be known by the title Buddha, which means 'Awakened One' or 'Enlightened One'.

His teachings were compiled by the Buddhist community in the Vinaya, his codes for monastic practice, and the Sutta Pitak, a compilation of teachings based on his discourses were passed down.

Supreme Being

Buddhism is a religion that does not include the belief in a monotheistic creator deity. As such, it has often been described as either (non-materialistic) atheism or as nontheistic. Like, Hinduism, the underlying concept is cyclic reincarnation (and purification until release). The object is to attain nirvana, release from the wheel of life.

Purpose of Man

Buddhism's core teachings relate to the individual focus on spiritual awakening, morality, and the natural laws of cause and effect (karma) rather than the worship or service of a divine creator.

Nirvana is a deeply peaceful state of being, categorised into two stages:

. (1) Nirvana with remainder: Achieved during life. The physical body and consciousness remain, but all attachments and negative afflictions are permanently gone, leaving only pure peace and refined awareness.

..(2) Parinirvana (or Nirvana without remainder): Occurs at the time of death, when physical existence terminates and the conditions for any future rebirth are completely severed.

In Buddhism, nirvana is not attained through bhakti (devotion) to God nor is it attained through a yogic unity with Brahman/God.

Hindu traditions consider the soul to be the unchanging eternal essence of a living being, which journeys through reincarnations until it attains self-knowledge. Buddhism, in contrast, asserts a rebirth theory **without a Self**, and considers realisation of non-Self or Emptiness as Nirvana (nibbana).

Nirvana is translated as the "blowing out" or "quenching" or the complete extinction of the "three fires" of greed, hatred and ignorance, by which a person is freed from the cycle of rebirth and suffering (*samsara*).

The Middle Way

The Buddha taught a **Middle Way** between sensual indulgence and severe asceticism, leading to freedom from ignorance, craving, re-birth and suffering.

His core teachings are summarised in the Four Noble Truths and the Noble Eightfold Path, a training of the mind that includes ethical training, and kindness, and meditative practices.

The Eightfold Path consists of eight practices: right view, right resolve, right speech, right conduct, right livelihood, right effort, right mindfulness, and right samadh ('meditative absorption or union'. alternatively, equanimous meditative awareness.

Symbolically, the above represent the awakening and liberation of the Buddha, and of the potential for his followers to reach the same liberation and freedom as him.

Buddhism rejects the idea of caste duty (swardharma), the idea that every person is assigned a fixed duty or law based on the caste they are born into. Furthermore, for Buddhists, violence was wrong for all, whether one was part of the warrior caste or not.

Sikhism

Guru Nanak (1469- 1539 CE) was the founder of Sikhism. He was succeeded by nine other human gurus until, in 1708, when the guru-ship was passed on by the tenth guru on his death to Guru Granth Sahib, who is now considered the living Guru by the followers of the Sikh faith.

The guru ship went into decline following to rise of Ranjit Singh (1780 –1839 CE) who was the founder of the Sikh empire first in the northwest, ruling from 1801 until his death in 1839.

Guru Nanak's words are registered in the form of 974 poetic hymns (Shabda) in the holy religious scripture of Sikhism.

Supreme Being

Sikhism is a monotheistic and pantheistic religion. Sikhs believe that there exists only one God and that God is simultaneously within everything and is all-encompassing.

In Sikhism, the word for God is "Waheguru" ('wondrous teacher'). The Waheguru is considered to be Nirankar ("shapeless"), Akal ("timeless").

In Sikhism, "Ik Onkar" is a fundamental statement of belief, meaning "There is only one God". It emphasises the oneness of God and the unity of all beings.

In Sikhism, the word for God is "Waheguru" ('wondrous teacher'). The Waheguru is considered to be Nirankar ("shapeless"), Akal ("timeless").

Purpose of Man

Sikhs accept reincarnation and karma concepts found in Buddhism, Hinduism, and Jainism, but do not necessarily infer a metaphysical soteriology such as a state of "heaven" or "nirvana."

Reincarnation, also called transmigration of soul, is the rebirth in another body (after physical death), of a person's soul or spirit into the new body. Its occurrence is a central tenet of Sikhism.

Sikh ethics emphasise the congruence between spiritual development and everyday moral conduct. "Truth is the highest virtue, but higher still is truthful living." Sikhism lays emphasis on 'From the one light, the entire universe welled up.'

The Sikhs believe that the soul has to transmigrate from one body to another as part of an **evolution** process of the soul. This evolution of the soul will eventually result in a union with God upon the proper purification of the spirit. If one does not perform righteous deeds, one's soul will continue to cycle in reincarnation forever.

A being is transmigrated to a higher life form in the next life until the soul of the being becomes Godlike. From a human life form, if one performs the proper functions, the person can achieve salvation with God.

In Sikh worldview, the everyday world is part of the Infinite Reality. Guru Nanak described living an "active, creative, and practical life" of "truthfulness, fidelity, self-control and purity" as being higher than the metaphysical truth: "Truth is the highest virtue, but higher still is truthful living."

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The Revealed religions

Abrahamic Religions

The three historic Abrahamic religions are Judaism, Christianity and Islam. Their adherents together muster more than half the world's population numerically, and constitute the largest religious bloc in the global society of today.

There is a fourth, the Bab-Bahai' religion, whose founders claim revelation and prophetic status. As Babism (1844) derived from the Shia branch of Islam and the Bahai' Faith (1892) professes the Quran as integral to its creed, I have omitted it in the Abrahamic group, treating it as a sect

The Revealed Religions

Whereas, the other monotheistic religions conceive of a Supreme Being or higher order of existence from humanly inferred and deducted conceptualisations, whether metaphysically and or otherwise, with the Abrahamic religions we are dealing with religion based, they claim, on divine revelation delivered to Man by the Supreme Being either by direct contact or through his prophets.

Starting from Judaism, through to Christianity and Islam, the religions basically embrace a common world-view, subject to their respective differences and interpretations. It is therefore valid to see them as a coherent evolutionary event.

Judaism

Abraham

Around the early second millennium the Supreme Being, God or Yahweh as he became known to them, negotiated a covenant with Abraham to leave his home in Ur of Chaldea and travel to Canaan, to be their Promised Land, which is today known as Israel. In return for their faithfulness to him, God promised Abraham numerous descendants, a blessed nation. Abraham agreed that he and his descendants would obey and worship God and lead by example. After a sojourn at Haran of some 60 years, Abraham arrived in the Promised land.

Patriarchs

First, Ishmael was born to Hagar, Abraham's Egyptian slave, and 14 years, Isaac was born to Sarah his wife. Hagar and Ishmael were both cast out to the desert of Beer-sheba. Later, they moved to the desert of Paran. In time, Ismael became the progenitor of the Arabs, whom God vouchsafed to reveal himself later through Muhammad.

Isaac married Rebecca, with twin sons, Esau and Jacob, born to them in that order. Jacob became the heir, most importantly, of the covenant of God with Abraham.

Jacob had 12 sons. Joseph. The youngest was sold into slavery in Egypt by his brothers and in time rose to become vizier among his captors, when his family found him during a famine, and eventually settled down in Egypt. Over time, they became enslaved, for some 400 years.

Moses

God raised Moses to liberate them, by then known as the Israelites. They crossed the Red Sea and at Mt Sinai, God gave them the Ten Commandments. After two collective acts of disobedience, for which they were required to spend 40 years in the desert, they arrived (again) at the Promised Land. Before they crossed over led by Joshua, and before he died, Moses handed them the Five Books of Moses, now known as the Torah, in which he recorded their history and various revelations made to him by God.

Torah

In the Torah, God revealed the creation of the world and of Adam and Eve, Man's. Fall by eating the forbidden fruit and the banishment to live by the sweat of their brow, but also the promise of redemption. Moses prophesied that God someone like him to lead them.

The Torah also renewed the covenant with God and contained a collection of laws, rituals, duties and instructions how the Israelites should conduct themselves..

Israelites in the Promised Land

The Israelites occupation of the Promised Land peaked with the kingdoms David and Solomon, and split into a northern kingdom of Israel (of 10 tribes) and southern Kingdoms of Judah (of 2 tribes). These fell into habits of idolatry, etc, constantly reproached through prophets by God, with dire consequences. In 722 BCE, the Assyrians conquered the north, and shipped the entire population away – and lost forever. In 587 BCE, the Babylonians exiled Judah to Babylon, and terminated the kingdom. Following much repentance and prophesies, the Jews (at this time they become known by this name) were allowed to return to Jerusalem and rebuild their Temple by Cyrus of Persia in 545 BCE, in what became the province of Yehudi. In time, the Jews would revolt against their new masters, the Hellenic Seleucids, forming the Hasmonaean kingdom in 164 BCE, to be re-conquered by the Romans in 63 BCE. Jesus Christ was born in 4 BCE. After his crucifixion, the Jews were finally dispersed by the Romans permanently in 70-135 CE

The Prophets

Moses was their greatest prophet. Following arrival in the Promised Land, God maintained a continuous interaction with his Chosen People, both directly with their kings and through his prophets. Besides the four Major Prophets, there were 15 Latter Prophets, categorised by their historical contexts: Pre-Exilic, Exilic, and Post-Exilic. They were specially vocal when the Chosen People strayed far from their covenant into idolatry. They played major roles in extricating the Israelites from the exile, and in rebuilding Jerusalem and the Second Temple.

Messiah

The Torah contains the following references foreshadowing that God would send a Messiah who would redeem mankind

- . **The Seed of the Woman:** God tells the serpent that the offspring of the woman will strike its head, interpreted as the first prophecy of the Messiah's victory over sin and death.
- . **The Blessing of Judah:** The Torah prophesies that the sceptre will not depart from Judah until "Shiloh" (often interpreted as the Messiah) comes.
- . **The Prophet like Moses:** Moses foretells that God will raise up a prophet like him.
- .- **Typology:** Believers see the Messiah's nature foreshadowed in events like the sacrifice of Isaac and the Passover lamb.

The primary prophet who prophesied a specific Messiah/Prophet was **Moses** himself. He foretold that God would raise up *"a prophet like me from among your own brothers."*

Following Moses, several subsequent prophets contributed distinct prophecies that further detailed the coming of the Messiah

In addition to these, kings and psalmists like **David** also recorded messianic psalms outlining the divine sonship, eternal priesthood, and worldwide dominion of the Messiah

The Jews believe in an anointed leader (still to come) who will lead the Chosen People to fulfil Man's destiny by unifying the human race in peace under God. Even after their dispersal by the Romans they have continued to believe so, and in their destiny as the Chosen People. They see the establishment of the state of Israel in Palestine in 1948 as a first return step in that direct.

Christianity

Christians accept and believe the whole Jewish Bible, also known as the Tanakh, known as their Old Testament, which includes the Torah, the Nevi'im (Prophets), and Ketuvim (Writings),

Christians however interpret and believe that the messianic prophecy of Torah point to one who must sacrifice himself and die to expiate Man's original sin and thereby re-open the gateway for the individual human, originally made in the image of God, to re-gain his eternal abode.

Christians believe God sent his Only Son to be the Messiah. Christians believe Jesus Christ was the Messiah, because he fulfilled the many messianic prophecies made.

They believe he was the Son of God because he said so, and was divinely attested on a number of occasions by his Father, by the powers he had, by the miracles he performed, by the divine authority with which he taught, and above all by his holiness.

Further, he revealed knowledge about God, not previously known, eg The Trinity, God's Love, etc. Finally, he rose from the dead on the third day, ascended to heaven forty days later, and sent the Holy spirit down ten days later.

As against an earlier collective to dealing with humans, Jesus Christ emphasised a new way of life focussed on the individual for his salvation.

Jesus Christ said he came to fulfil the scriptures , not to destroy them. Christianity was the fulfilment of God's plan.

Traditional Judaism does not view their Scriptures as pointing to a divine, dying, and resurrecting saviour, but rather views the verses used by Christians as either referring to historical figures (like King David) or to the nation of Israel as a whole.

The "Third Temple" is a highly anticipated, hypothetical Jewish place of worship prophesied to be rebuilt on the Temple Mount in Jerusalem. It would succeed the First Temple (destroyed by the Babylonians in 586 BCE) and the Second Temple (destroyed by the Romans in 70 CE). The Jews view this as integral to the role of the Messiah, not fulfilled by Jesus.

ISLAM

Quran

Islam is the religion of the Muslims. The Quran is believed by Muslims to be a Revelation directly from God (Allah). The Quran was orally revealed by God to the final Islamic prophet Muhammad through the angel Gabriel incrementally over a period of some 23 years, beginning on the Night of Power, when Muhammad was 40, and concluding in 632, the year of his death.

His main message is that there was no other God but Allah and that people should lead their lives in a way that was pleasing to Allah

The Quran confirms the divine origin of the Torah, Gospel, and Psalms. It also declares the Quran to be the concluding word of God, with its message being universal. While the previously revealed Books were tampered with or not timely recorded, thus lacking in authenticity, the Quran contains the exclusive word of God, without any additions to, or deletions from, its original content, over the passage of time. Muslims believe Jesus Christ was a prophet.

“Say: We believe in Allah and that which is revealed to us and that which was revealed to Ibrahim [Abraham] and Ismail [Ishmael] and Ishaq [Isaac] and Yaqub [Jacob] and the tribes, and that which was vouchsafed to Musa [Moses] and Isa [Jesus] and the [other] prophets from their Lord. We make no distinction between any of them, and to Him we have surrendered.” (Aal Imran 3:84)

The divine Books catered to the specific needs of their respective peoples, and thus differed in content and style. However, they all conveyed the same basic message of monotheism, and emphasised being obedient to Allah and doing good to others.

Core Beliefs of Islam

Belief in Allah

The central theme of the Quran is monotheism. There is only one God, referred to as Allah in Arabic. He is the only Deity worthy of worship and unconditional obedience. Allah is the creator of the universe, and has complete authority over all that exists.

While Allah has given humanity the choice whether to obey Him or not in this life, other creations and objects such as the animals, plants, mountains, oceans, and planets, are all in submission to the will of Allah.

He is thus the sole master of the heavens and the earth, and He alone sustains all His creation. Allah has no associate – no parents or children or predecessors or successors. He is the Supreme Being, accountable to none. He has always been, and always will be.

Whatever occurs is by the decree of Allah and in accordance with His will. Allah is aware of all that takes place in the universe, and nothing escapes His all-encompassing knowledge. Thus, all happenings and incidents in the life of a person are already known to Allah and comply with His will.

Belief in the Hereafter

This world shall come to an end. All life on earth shall cease to exist and all its landmarks will be flattened by the calamities of the Last Day. Then Allah shall resurrect all those who ever lived, and people will be called to give an account of all their deeds in this life.

The judgement shall then be pronounced, and people will be rewarded or punished according to their actions: those who associated with Allah and lived righteously shall be in the gardens of Paradise, while those who did otherwise will be punished by Him in the fire of Hell. This afterlife will be eternal, and people shall be dealt with in perfect justice, taking into account their specific circumstances in this life.

The doctrine of the last day and eschatology (the final fate of the universe) may be considered the second great doctrine of the Quran

Belief in Man

All human beings are equal in their utter dependence upon God, and their well-being depends upon their acknowledging that fact and living accordingly.

Islam rejects the concept of original sin and Muslims believe that all human beings are born pure children automatically.

The Quran does not assert a natural immortality of the human soul, since man's existence is dependent on the will of God: when he wills, he causes man to die; and when he wills, he raises him to life again in a bodily resurrection

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Abrahamic Beliefs in Common

Supreme Being

The Abrahamic religions believe in common in the One and same Supreme Being, who has revealed himself to them by different names, Yahweh to the Jews, Allah to the Muslims, and in the Holy Trinity (God the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit) to Christians.

All three religions believe God to be eternal, omnipotent, omniscient, complete and self-sufficient unto himself, wise, and supremely beneficent.

All three religions accept that God was the Prime Mover, who created the universe and Man. God created Adam as the first Man and fashioned Eve from him, placing them in a heavenly garden.

In the case of the Christians, they additionally believe that Jesus Christ is the Second Person of the Holy Trinity, the Son of God. The Jews do not regard him as such, nor as a prophet. Islam likewise, but they accept him as a prophet.

Purpose of Man

All three religions believe that God created Man with intelligence to enable him to know, love, worship and serve him, and live with him eternally hereafter. He included free will as some kind of qualifying test to determine the worthy from the unworthy.

Being self-sufficient, God had no need to be served or worshipped. The entire overture on his part was for the benefit of Man.

Fall of Man

All three religions believe that Satan (Iblis) tricked Adam and Eve into eating from the forbidden tree. They believe both Adam and Eve realised their mistake and turned to God in sincere repentance.

Hereafter, the religions differ. Christianity believe that God banished Adam and Eve from paradise for their original sin, with a dimmed intellect able to perceive God, and decreed that they and their descendants shall live by the sweat of their brow on Earth until redemption by expiation of their original sin by a divine messiah, namely Jesus Christ. In addition, Man had to be judged worthy to qualify for re-admission, by leading a moral life. Jesus showed the “way” to salvation when he said: “love thy God as I have loved you, and thy neighbour as thyself.”

Judaism views the story of Adam and Eve as a tragic act of disobedience rather than a cosmic "Fall" that permanently corrupted human nature. Mainstream Jewish theology rejects the concept of "original sin", teaching instead that every person is born pure and innocent, possessing the free will to choose between good and evil. Humans possess an innate impulse toward selfishness or survival (yetzer hara), balanced by an inclination toward goodness (yetzer hatov). Because humans retain complete free will, they have the capacity to master their impulses and choose righteousness. Returning to God is an active, ongoing process achieved through personal regret, confession to God (or asking forgiveness from an injured peer), and changing one's behaviour. Jewish concepts of heaven and hell are vague, focussing on repentance and leading a good life

Islam also rejects the concept of original sin. Because God forgave Adam and Eve upon their repentance, there was no lingering guilt or cosmic debt passed down to their children. The Quran teaches that no soul bears the burden of another soul's sins. Islam also takes the position that every human being is born pure and innocent, and no one inherits the sins of another. People are only responsible for their own choices and actions. The move of the first parents to Earth was not a punishment of a permanent generational curse, but part of God's pre-ordained plan for humanity to act as stewards on Earth. Islam is however categorical that people will be rewarded or punished according to their actions: those who live righteously shall be in the gardens of Paradise, while those who do otherwise will be punished in the fire of Hell.

Messiah

Christianity accept the revelation as delivered to the Chosen People that he would send a Messiah., and they regard Jesus Christ as the prophesied Messiah to fulfil the intentions of the divine. They differ however in regarding the purpose of the messiah. Christians believe that he came down to expiate the original sin by giving up his own life his life as a redemptive sacrifice, thereby re-opening the gates to paradise. They further understand that this act of atonement had to be performed at the divine level, and God out of supreme love sent his Only Son to do the job, and Jesus Christ was God incarnate.

In Judaism, the Messiah is a mortal human king from the lineage of King David who will be anointed to usher in an era of universal peace, gather the Jewish exiles to Israel, rebuild the Temple in Jerusalem, and lead all humanity to recognise one God. Because these criteria prophecies were not fulfilled by Jesus, Judaism does not accept him as the Messiah. Instead, Judaism teaches that the world remains unredeemed until a future time when a qualified human leader fulfils these visible signs completely.

In Islam, the Messiah is Jesus (Isa al-Masih).He is revered as a major prophet and messenger of God, born of a virgin, but he is strictly considered a human being rather than divine. The Quran affirms his title as the Messiah denoting his special status and God-given role to guide the Children of Israel.

Islam firmly rejects the concept of Jesus as the Son of God or part of a Trinity, emphasising strict monotheism. Jesus performed profound miracles—such as healing the blind and raising the dead—by God's permission, and was given the Gospel (Injeel) to confirm the Torah. Islamic theology teaches that Jesus was not crucified or killed by his enemies. God raised him up to heaven, substituting another in his likeness on the cross.

Muslims believe Jesus will return to Earth physically in the latter days. Upon his return, he will defeat Antichrist (al-Masih ad-Dajjal). He will rule justly, affirm the final message of Islam, break the cross, and establish a period of peace before eventually dying a natural death and being buried.

After-life

Christians understand that the mission of Jesus Christ was to re-open for Man the gates to heaven and eternal life, subject to judgement and punishment in hell for failure to qualify..

The text of the Torah only features a few thematic indications: It mentions in several places that the righteous are "gathered to their people" or their ancestors after death. This implies a post-death continuation where loved ones are reunited. The dead are frequently described as descending to Scheol, which is the bowels of the earth. In these early passages, it is largely portrayed as a place of oblivion rather than a conscious realm of reward or punishment. The concept of the soul's survival is alluded to in verses (from Ecclesiastes) which states, "And the dust returns to the earth as it was, and the spirit returns to God, Who gave it." Explicit mentions of the resurrection of the dead do not appear in the first five books of Moses; they emerge in later prophetic texts, such as Daniel and Isaiah.,

Islam is explicit about the last judgement, with the righteous going to Paradise and the non-righteous going to hell. It is estimated that approximately one-third of the Quran is eschatological, dealing with the afterlife in the next world and with the day of judgment at the end of time.

Evolution

Most Christians have no problem with evolution.

Most Reform, Conservative, and Modern Orthodox Jews and rabbis accept the scientific validity of evolution as a tool or mechanism through which God brought about life and shaped the universe. Liberal movements interpret the six days of creation in Genesis metaphorically or poetically rather than as a strict scientific timeline

Muslim thinkers have proposed and accepted elements of the theory of evolution, some holding the belief of the supremacy of God in the process. Some scholars suggested that both narratives of creation and of evolution, as understood by modern science, may be believed by modern Muslims as addressing two different kinds of truth, the revealed and the empirical. Most Muslims accept the evolution of animals and plants as a process guided by God. They firmly reject the unguided evolution. The Quran states that Adam was specially created. They reject the idea that evolution happens by blind chance.

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Conclusions from the Religious domain

These are my overall findings of my review of the religions vis-a-vis the Metaphysical issues. I find an organic evolutionary process operating in the development of the various religions.

. (1) Early Man surfaced with an in-built awareness of the unknown – as well as the faculty of imagination among his incipient mental abilities. There is nothing extraordinary or unnatural in his ascribing the causes of his unknowns to more sentient beings, as primitive communities did, and do, to spirits in animism..

(2) In the next stage, Man began to form communities and incipient civilised communities. As their dependence on the vagaries of the environment grew, so too did their societal problems, which now included managing their civitas and their people. Their range of needs as well as imponderables inevitably grew. Communities developed their own deities and folk religion, and turned to them for help, both through formalised and individual worship. Early in their development some communities would apprehend the possibilities of life-after death by rituals for the dead.

(3) In a third stage, we have the early civilisations evolving within distinct cultures, with growing combinations of chiefdoms, kingdoms, states, and empires. Religion is institutionalised, and invariably becomes an arm of the body politic and an instrument of power.. Not surprisingly, the deities are also elevated in status, often in a polytheistic pantheon of varying responsibility, and with one or more gods given superior (though generally not (yet) supreme) status. The societal focus was on the state not the individual. For the latter, folk religion continued to serve their purpose.

(4) At the fourth stage, civilised societies would have a growing intelligentsia, some of whom would begin probing the metaphysical frontiers, as their colleagues advanced their knowledge and skills of the temporal world. Through the revelation of religious visionaries, and or if not by the growth of a collective conviction, and in appropriate cases backed by the political leadership, some advanced civilised societies came to accept the notion of a Monotheistic Deity at the apex of things, if not immediately or exclusively the Supreme Being. In some, but not all cases, this led to discarding their earlier polytheistic understandings and practice. At this stage conceptions of the Purpose of Man, including an afterlife, would have emerged, but the emphasis would be on temporal survival, and the focus would be on societal development. Traditional China was the outstanding example of the latter..

Lord Krishna is a major and widely loved god in Hinduism . People worship him as the eighth incarnation (avatar) of the god Vishnu, and many also see him as the Supreme God. He is a symbol of love, joy, compassion, and divine protection.

(5) In the fifth stage, we have Monotheism and a Transcendent Ultimate Reality together. In parallel to and overlapping the preceding stage, the Hindu religion recognised a Brahman as the Ultimate Reality, for all practical purposes the Supreme Being. Hinduism is also hinged on the concept that Man's soul was but a spark of the Ultimate Reality, transcendent in the universe, and that Man's destiny is through inner identification with the Ultimate Reality and spiritual progress, by re-incarnation as necessary, to achieve release back to his original state (atman). There is no clear link in Hinduism between the Ultimate Reality here and the concept Brahman, and Jainism and Buddhism which have imported re-incarnation into their thought, have not taken on Brahman, while Sikhism has adopted God as the Supreme Being. We may note that while Hinduism does not claim prophets and visionaries, but deeply knowledgeable rishis, the founders of Jainism and Sikhism claim divine inspiration. Buddha claims enlightenment through practice of his religion. Buddhism in particular claim to be non-theistic. In addition to the layers drawn from Jainism and Buddhism, such as the sramanic and bhakti movements, Hinduism retains a rich overlay of deities and avatars (incarnations) The Trimurti in Hinduism is formed by three principal deities: Brahma (the creator), Vishnu (the preserver), and Shiva (the destroyer or transformer). Vishnu is known to have 10 avatars, of which Lord Krishna is the best known, while the Lord Buddha is thought to be one of them. Thus Hinduism can be thought of as representing religion developed at the human level to its richest and most complex level.

(6) In the sixth stage, we have the three Revealed Monotheistic religions. I treat them as one, for it is the same Supreme Being or God involved in all three. The three Abrahamic religions are Judaism, Christianity and Islam, and they evolved historically in that order. The first point of note is that (collectively) they did not grow as the expression of a particular civilisation and culture, like the others. In this case, Abraham was re-located from Ur in Sumer to Canaan in Palestine under specific divine instructions to found Judaism there, and Christianity was founded by Jesus Christ, whom Christians claim is the Son of God, from within its folds, in fulfilment of Judaic messianic prophecies. Islam was founded by Prophet Muhamad, a descendant of Abraham, in nearby Arabia, who acknowledged the scriptures and prophets of the two preceding religions/ He claimed to be the last and final prophet, to whom the same God delivered the Quran through the same angel Gabriel who announced the virgin birth of Jesus. The Jews understood that their mission as the Chosen People was to bring God's peace and hope to the whole world. Christianity and Islam likewise understand this to be their mission. The Jews have some technical difficulties fulfilling their prophecies, and are among other things awaiting the promised the messiah to lead them to accomplish their mission. The Christians and Muslims are today international religions, having spread their religions world-wide, together making up 51% of the global population. Needless to say with direct contact, the three religions offer much information humanly unknowable. In terms of our Metaphysical issues, the revelations of all three religions about the Supreme Being and the Purpose of Man, and their beliefs thereof, are substantially the same, if differing in detail and interpretation. The direct involvement of the Supreme Being in these religions has been the outstanding feature.

(7) Throwing our religious enquiry into relief, we have the case of Communist China, which rejected their traditional social-religious development and substituted the ideology Marxist-Communism – with Chinese characteristics. The cardinal features of the ideology are it is atheistic and its utopia is a classless society each given what he needs and contributing what he is able. Communism offers an

non-religious alternative path for evolution, which we will examine at the end, as it falls outside our Metaphysical issues.

On. the First Metaphysical issue.

Firstly, it is clear that Dharmic and the Abrahamic religions are the two that have penetrated the subject areas most profoundly and come out with detailed formulations. At core, the Hindu Brahman or Ultimate Reality and Abrahamic God are the same Supreme Being. On both sides, they adjure the notion of Man proving the existence of God. Both sides reject the formal logic of metaphysics as able to determine the existence of the Supreme One. Hindus bluntly say it is absurd for Man to prove God's existence. Christians say it is not possible to do the same, only that it is reasonable to infer his existence. Islam asserts that every human is born with an innate spiritual disposition (fitrah) that intuitively recognises and acknowledges a higher Creator. All the religions say that God can only be apprehended by the inner experience and belief of Man. There would appear to be a lot of common ground for clarification and synthesis without affecting their respective dogmas.

To conclude on our first (1) Metaphysical issue, therefore (Is there a Supreme Being?) both the Hindu and Abrahamic religions respond: there is, but you cannot prove it metaphysically. You must believe it.

Jesus Christ

It behoves me here to make an important distinction which applies in the Abrahamic religions, which will be relevant when an individual comes down to choosing which to follow. Jesus Christ was not only a Prophet, who fulfilled the prophecies of the Messiah in the Jewish Bible, but declared he was the Son of God, the Second Person of the Holy Trinity.

There are two positions here. He said this either because it was the sure way to be put to death, for blasphemy; or because it is the truth and he did come down on a divine mission to die for the expiation of original sin.

Christians believe the latter. They point to his complete sanctity, the holiness of his teachings, the authenticity and divine authority of his messages, his extensive works of charity, particularly curing the infirm, and his miracles, including the raising of dead on three occasions. He constantly attested to divinity. He forgave sins. Above all, he rose from the dead three days after his crucifixion, and ascended to heaven, both events witnessed by many. And Jesus continues to be involved with the salvation of humanity through the institution of his church, the sacraments and particularly the Holy Eucharist.

On the Second Metaphysical issue

On the second issue, the Purpose of Man, If you believe in a Supreme Being, then it is relevant to believe in the teaching of the religion concerned.

All the Abrahamic religions believe that Man was created by the Supreme Being to know him, to love him, to serve him, and subject to performance to live with him eternally in paradise after his death. Every human is possessed of a soul, is an individual, has free will and is responsible by his actions for his ultimate evolutionary destiny, whether qualifying for paradise with the divine or otherwise. And, every person had one life to work things out. The position of Man in Hinduism is basically the same, except his objective is release (moksha) of his soul (atman) through the cycle of rebirth from materiality (maya) to re-join the cosmic spirit (Brahman).

All the Abrahamic religions believe God prescribed the moral laws (Ten Commandments) by which Man should live and be judged worthy of everlasting life with him, or otherwise. They all believe Adam and Eve fell, i.e. disobeyed God by eating the forbidden fruit, and repented. Judaism and Islam believe that God forgave them, and the gateway to happiness remained open to them, subject to performance.

Christianity viewed the fall as original sin inherited by all succeeding mankind, to be expiated by divine sacrifice for which God would send a Messiah, eventually Jesus Christ, his Only Begotten Son.

Upon his crucifixion, death and resurrection, the gateways were re-opened. Thus, the final Christian position is the same as the others. Additionally, subject to baptism and or belief, a weakened mankind was provided with various sacramental aids, including the eucharist, to make it to heaven..

There is no notion of original sin or fall in Hinduism or the Dharmatic religions. In Hinduism , the traditions consider the soul to be the unchanging eternal essence of a living being, which journeys through reincarnations until it attains self-knowledge or moksha.

Buddhism, in contrast, conceives of a rebirth theory **without a Self**, and considers realisation of non-Self or Emptiness as nirvana. Further, it contains another difference - nirvana is achieved into two stages:

. (1). Nirvana with remainder: Achieved during life. The physical body and consciousness remain, but all attachments and negative afflictions are permanently gone, leaving only pure peace and refined awareness.

..(2) Parinirvana (or Nirvana without remainder): Occurs at the time of death, when physical existence terminates and the conditions for any future rebirth are completely severed.

In Buddhism, nirvana is not attained through bhakti (devotion) to God nor is it attained through a yogic unity with Brahman/God. Nirvana is translated as the "blowing out" or "quenching" or the complete extinction of the "three fires" of greed, hatred and ignorance, by which a person is freed from the cycle of rebirth and suffering (samsara). Buddhism is more purely non-theistic.

According to Buddhism, the Gautama achieved enlightenment (nirvana with remainder) when he was 35 years old and lived till he was 80 years. This pathway is open to those who practise the faith and many attain it. Those who delay their death to teach others the way are known as bodhisattva. In my earlier distinctions, they would have fallen into the category of persons gifted with arcane abilities, which would include mystics, visionaries, sufis, swamis, faqirs, fangshuis, lotangs, and prophets – and probably “living saints” like Mahatma Gandhi. I have excluded them on the premise their contributions would have been made with the religious groups. I will not refer to them again, but I recommend that there is room for (scientific) behavioural and neurological studies to check out potential information and evolutionary possibilities.

The bottom line is that Man must strive for moral perfection, by denial of his baser instincts and doing the right thing. The teachings of the Abrahamic religions in relation to the latter are well encompassed in the words Love and Charity, to God and to his fellowman. Using different terms, the Dharmatic religions are driven by the same virtues, while stressing different practices and self-controls. The Buddhist term detachment and the right use of kama (Love) underly everything.

Common Religious Pathway

If we take the Abrahamic and Dharmatic religions together, they all point towards a possible common pathway for evolution of Man, towards an afterlife in union with the Supreme Being and or Ultimate Reality or Cosmic Spirit, in the case of the latter religions attesting that Man's soul is inherently divine and seeks its home. They all offer a complete world-view, moral guidelines and way of life towards achieving the common objective.

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Global Religious Affiliation Today

According to figures given by OurWorld-Our Data⁴¹ the world population that subscribed to a religion in 2020 was 6.005 billion, against a population then of 7.942 billion, or 75.6%. The largest groups were Christians (2.3 billion) Muslims (2..0 billion), Hindus (1.2 billion), Buddhists (320 million), Other Religions (170 million) and Jews (15 million). The number with No Religion counted (inclusive of the Communist countries) another 1.9 million or 24.4% of he world population

⁴¹ - <https://ourworldindata.org/religion#explore-data-section>

Global surveys in 2020 by Ipsos⁴² show that a vast majority of the world's population believes in a Supreme Being or higher power. Depending on the study, between 51% and 83% of global citizens believe in God or some form of divine entity, not surprisingly more among the less developed countries. In a more limited survey in a 2023 survey⁴³ of 28 countries, Ipsos found some 40% believed in God "as described in holy scriptures," 20% believe in "a higher spirit but not as described in holy scriptures," another 21% believe in neither God nor any higher spirit, and 19% are not sure or will not say. The surveys also show other clear trends: the more developed countries are becoming more disengaged from religion, likewise the younger generations. It poses the question whether the high participation rates today are residual and will disappear in time. The surveys also reflect a growing level of tolerance all round.

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⁴² - <https://www.ipsos.com/en-us/news-polls/ipsos-global-dvisory-supreme-beings-afterlife-and-evolution>

⁴³ - <https://www.ipsos.com/en-sg/two-global-religious-divides-geographic-and-generational>

Chapter Nine

Outcome of Scientific Review

(Editorial Note. “Modern” refers to science and philosophy in the Western cultural tradition. For reasons not requiring explanations, the Chinese and Indian cultural heritages are not covered.)

Science and Metaphysics

The contemporary intellectual accepts that Man’s thinking faculties operate in two dimensions, the (i) the metaphysical and (ii) the empirical. The third factor is (iii) his philosophy which is best understood as the “world view” and or “way of life” deriving from an understanding of the two.

We need to make some distinctions between the first two. Both modes use logic, reason and common-sense to pursue knowledge. But, while metaphysicians’ domain is to speculate about the abstract beyond physical reality, science or the empirical domain deals with the facts and materiality of things.

Hypothesising about a Supreme Being is precisely the business of the metaphysician, even though we know it is beyond him to prove anything. However, it is strictly out of the domain of science. When a scientist asks about or speculates in the abstract, he is being metaphysical.

We might expect metaphysics to attempt to prove or disapprove the existence of God, But we could not ask science to do this, Where a scientist moves to the point of (personally) believing in God, he is using empirical knowledge to support his metaphysical position. A scientist can prove that God was not necessary in a particular situation, but cannot prove he does not exist.

The philosopher can come from any background, including from the religious community. With the instant availability of all knowledge, it is increasingly the layman – as the individual, the politician and the citizen who is the ultimate “end-user”.

At bottom, all parties look at the same problem-set: the Metaphysical issues- was and Is there a Supreme Being and whether or not responsible for originating the cosmos, evolution and Man. Depending on the answers, they work their way to addressing the Purpose of Man.

There is no reason why a scientist should not believe in the God-option if his metaphysical self tells him so. The sciences then take on the Purpose of Man. If he rejects the God-option, it becomes encumbent on the sciences to the find the non-theistic solutions for the Metaphysical issues.

Today, while scientists are moving deep into their specialities, to disengage from metaphysical explanations, philosophers are employing empirical techniques to probe common ground. Or, putting it another way, they are harvesting new knowledge of the physical world to refine the boundaries between the disciplines.

Most people today, certainly professionals, are deeply developed intellectually, and have equal and easy access (and tools) to information across all domains, and so are able to form conclusions about the Metaphysical issues incorporating all fields. In fact, I get the impression there are more metaphysical-philosophical views emerging from scientists and others than philosophers per se these days.

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Belief Profile of Science Community

Believers and Non-Believers

For convenience we refer to those who believe in the God option as **believers**. They are generally people of a religious faith, but may include people of no religious persuasion. They could be from any walk of life, and include metaphysicians, philosophers and scientists.

We refer to the others as “**non-believers**”. They could be from any walk of life, and include philosophers and scientists but probably not a metaphysician per se - who would be peculiarly cross-eyed character.. They fall into two categories, (i) “atheists”, who reject the notion of God altogether as rubbish, and (ii) “agnostics”, who are not sure, and are basically open-minded about it.

“Deists” @ “theists” are people who believe or are inclined to believe in the existence of God, but are agnostic about everything else. They would generally be counted as believers

In present day society, people prefer to remain undisclosed and may adopt various philosophic stances such “humanist”, “stoic” or even “free-thinker”.

Global Belief

In a limited survey in a 2023 survey⁴⁴ of 28 countries, Ipsos found some 40% believed in God “as described in holy scriptures,” 20% believe in “a higher spirit but not as described in holy scriptures,” another 21% believe in neither God nor any higher spirit, and 19% are not sure or will not say. The surveys also show other clear trends: the more developed countries are becoming more disengaged from religion, likewise the younger generations. It poses the question whether the high participation rates today are residual and will disappear in time. They surveys also reflect a growing level of tolerance all round

Belief Among Scientists

In the 21st century, a survey⁴⁵ of **scientists** who were members of the American Association for the Advancement of Science, conducted by the Pew Research s in May and June 2009 found just over half of scientists (51%) believed in some form of deity or higher power: specifically, 33% believed in God, while 18% believed in a universal spirit or higher power. Four-in-ten scientists (41%) said they did not believe in God or a higher power, By contrast, according to a survey conducted by the Pew Research Canter in July 2006. more than eight-in-ten Americans (83%) said they believed in God and 12% believed in a universal spirit or higher power.

The proposition that there is a Prime Mover or God underlies the religious belief of most people and remains a viable hypothesis even if not proven. **Half the scientists believe in some form of deism.**

Given the significant percentage of scientists (41.0%) who are atheists, one wonders how this conviction has come about. Most likely, it is on the basis that, as God is unprovable and they prefer not to tangle with religious teachings. On present cosmological understandings, they rest content with alternative conceptions of creation and the purpose of Man.

The Scientific Community

For our purpose, we have identified that the scientific community falls into five groups: (i) the cosmologists, (ii) the evolutionary biologists (iii) the human-centred scientists, ie. the brain-and-behaviour people, (iv) other terrestrial scientists, and (v) the sub-atomic scientists. We have looked at the first three as their work over-laps the metaphysical domains. But discoveries can occur anywhere, with quantum impact on our quest.

The de facto Scientific Perspective

⁴⁴ - <https://www.ipsos.com/en-sg/two-global-religious-divides-geographic-and-generational>

⁴⁵ - <https://www.pewresearch.org/religion/2009/11/05/scientists-and-belief/>

Since science cannot prove or disprove the God-option, its **de facto working target** is to establish whether there are other (scientific) bases for the Metaphysical issues, in particular: (1) how the cosmos (and all in it) came in to existence from nothing, (2) the design and intent of evolution and (iii) the purpose of Man

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Atheism – The “Non-theistic” Destiny Option

As Atheism is the natural alternative to the God-option, some background is in order, Atheism is historically the confrontation of the religious domain.

Atheism is specifically the philosophical position that the cosmos, evolution and Man came into existence, took shape and continue without the involvement of a Supreme Being as the Prime Move or First Cause, or creator. Most modern definitions frame atheism simply as a lack of belief in gods rather than an active claim that no gods exist. The norm is to define atheism in terms of an explicit stance against the Supreme Being.

Historic Struggle.

From the Renaissance onwards, the reaction to the dominance of Christianity set in. The hostility maximised over the Scientific revolution, the Enlightenment, and French revolution. While The church-hardliners were described as obscurantists, the reactionaries were excommunicated, and tarred as “the godless” or “atheists”. It was often not clear whether the latter were anti-clerical or anti-god. One cannot help the impression that many atheists over the years have condemned the existence of God because they rejected the tyranny of obedience to his moral laws, while cherishing the right to free will and choosing to decide as they wish without obligation, not to mention being accountable “for their sins” and threatened with eternal damnation in unmentionable places. Many took an intermediate position, and called themselves “deist” or “theist”, while others remained plainly “agnostic”, free-thinkers or humanists.

Since the late 18th century, there has been a progressive battle for “de-christenisation” or separation of state and religion. Much of this was straightened out with the UN bill of rights, in 1948, but implementation has taken time and the situation on the ground is mixed. Thus, in 1954, the US President Dwight Eisenhower amended the US Pledge of Alliance to include the words “Under God” (a reversal of the trend) , while it was only in 1963 that the US Supreme Court banned mandatory bible readings and recitation of the Lord's Prayer in all public schools. And, finally, it was only in 2016 that US President Obama signed an amendment law which extended religious freedom protections to include **atheists, agnostics, and humanists**, legally recognising “non-theistic beliefs and the right not to profess or practice any religion”, for the first time. In the United Kingdom, on the other hand, the King reigns supreme as head of both the Anglican Church and the state, while religion is compulsory in public funded schools, subject to parents rights of withdrawal..

Except for their primary position on a Supreme Being antecedent to the cosmos, today the religions, sciences and philosophies increasingly share a wide range of concerns about Man and the planet. The boundary line between scientists and philosophers is often indistinguishable, There are deists and atheists from among philosophers and scientists – and atheists among religious philosophers – so I found.

Atheist Belief Position

There is no body of thought, belief or philosophy subscribed to by atheists in common apart from a common rejection of the existence of a Supreme Being (and other gods), Their collective fall-back belief position is that the physical, natural universe is all that exists, making reality testable and understandable through science rather than metaphysics and mysticism.

In their universe, moral codes and values come from human experience, empathy, and social cooperation rather than divine command. And, life does not have an inherent cosmic purpose; individuals give their own lives meaning through happiness, relationships, and personal goals.

Atheists by definition align themselves with materialism, physicalism, or naturalism. They view reality through strictly scientific evidence and physical laws. "Creation" was not imbued with spiritual energy nor a product of divine design but is entirely physical. Its existence, properties, and effects on the human body are fully explained by the laws of chemistry and physics, requiring no supernatural explanation.

In effect the atheist of today has placed his bets on science emerging with the answers how the cosmos, evolution and Man came into existence, what have been the intermediate objectives, and what the terminal objectives of Man are. At which point, man will understand his destiny.

This study has included a comprehensive review of both modern philosophy and science, as a good atheist might undertake to pursue his quest. The coverage can be found in the relevant chapters, and in the earlier Volume** II, where appertaining to the physical formation of the cosmos.

Scope of this review

In the scientific domain, the ontological preoccupations have now focussed within (i) cosmology and its underpinning sub-atomic physics, (b) the evolution of life, underpinned by biology; and (c) the further stages of evolution through biological, intellectual, behavioural, and sociological development, civilisation, and technology.

One thing is certain. Man is advancing in rapid leaps through the technological age to becoming a Knowledge Society/Civilisation. When that happens, the answers in all domains will be common sense.

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The Cosmological Frontier

The Universe of Stephen Hawking

Stephen William Hawking (1942-2018) was an English theoretical astrophysicist, cosmologist and professor of mathematics. Between 1979 and 2009, he was the Lucian Professor of Mathematics at Cambridge. A doyen in his field, he was re-known for many contributions, including his work on Black Hole Radiation.

Origin of the Cosmos

It was Stephen Hawking who focussed the growing atheistic viewpoints around this issue when in his 2010 book, *The Grand Design* (co-authored with Leonard Mlodinow), he stated as follows:

"Because there is a law such as gravity, the universe can and will create itself from nothing. Spontaneous creation is the reason there is something rather than nothing, why the universe exists, why we exist. It is not necessary to invoke God to light the blue touch paper and set the universe going."

In his earlier 1988 book, *A Brief History of Time*, Hawking famously concluded that finding a complete theory of physics would allow us to "know the mind of God." However, *The Grand Design* marked a definitive shift. He clarified that advancing science and M-theory (quantum physics applied to the early universe) made the concept of a divine creator redundant for the Big Bang to occur. Around the release of the book, Hawking reinforced this view during an interview with ABC News, explicitly stating: "One can't prove that God doesn't exist, but science makes God unnecessary. The laws of physics can explain the universe without the need for a creator".

Hawking's vision was to apply the newly emergent quantum mechanics to the origination of the cosmos. It was found that, at the quantum level, matter not only existed, but was in a highly perturbed state, infused with energy, spin, angular momentum, in dynamic motion and interaction, varying with temperature. It was due to the perturbations from these causes, in conditions of

singularity, that triggered the birth of the cosmos, which followed the (quantum) laws of nature. He said that gravity alone could cause the cosmos to form. He made various proposals, in particular the No Boundary Proposal and the M Theory, which have spawned other theories.

Need for TOE

Hawkings recognised that there were gaps in our knowledge holding back the break-through in our cosmological understanding. Physicists believe that all the four fundamental forces that shape the universe acted as one single force during the first moments of the universe, before cooling and splitting apart. So far, they have integrated electro-magnetism, the strong force (binding atoms) and the weak force (radioactive decay) into a Grand Unified Theory (GUT), but have been unable to integrate the workings of the fourth force, namely gravity, into a Theory of Everything (TOE)..

Gravity holds the whole cosmos together. It is nothing less than the curvature of spacetime due to the weight of matter thereabouts. We know how gravity works together in practice, but cannot get the different mathematics to connect up. At the moment, the absence of a TOE puts Hawking's thesis of a self-creating cosmos on hold and still a scientific hypothesis.

Gravity (Optional reading)

It is worth digressing a little to illustrate the extreme range at which TOE science is working. Every fundamental force in the universe (anywhere) requires a messenger elementary particle to transmit it, generically called bosons. These are massless, have no charge, have a spin of 2 and travel at the speed of light, like photons. The graviton is the boson that is thought to transmit the force of gravity.

No experiment has yet been able to directly detect gravitons. Since gravity is so much weaker than the other forces, detecting an individual graviton in a laboratory is impossible with current technology. Bosons are millions of times smaller than visible under our most powerful EMS. In fact, it has been detected only once and then for only a few seconds before disintegration, namely the Higg's boson at CERN in 2012.

Hide-bound by the Speed of Light

Hawking did not think we could break the speed of light. He said Man's future lay in space, but he conceived of us only colonising the solar system. Taking the scenario of temporal longevity, or worse still temporal immortality as the current working target of evolution, the future of Man confined to the solar system is a quite uninspired proposition. In effect we are talking about patches of surface on Mars, 31 km above in the atmosphere of Venus, and deep underground at the polis of Mercury, and perhaps on some of the asteroids – nowhere else, unless we are thinking of artificial planets in the sky.

The whole architecture of space-time is beginning to bug us, as Man enters the Technological age. Nothing can travel within it faster than light. According to Einstein's formula $E=mc^2$ (where c =speed of light) any increase in speed would tear the world apart with the energy (E) released. Apparently, even at our boundaries where the cosmos is expanding faster light, the rule applies.

Unless we re-think our science Man has no future in space per se. Presently, It will take us 2,700,000 light-years to reach the Milky Way, if we get close to even 10% of the speed of light.. We are up against a physical boundary of our own making. I am a firm believer, we shall find a way to zip through the universe. In such a scenario we shall have quite another view of TOE, and rational picture of how the cosmos began.

Theorists have proposed several concepts to bypass or "break" the cosmic speed limit of light. Physicist Miguel Alcubierre in 1994, suggested warping spacetime by contracting space in front of a spacecraft and expanding it behind. The ship itself stays stationary in a "warp bubble" while the space around it moves faster than light. Wormholes, on the other hand, are theoretical "bridges" or tunnels through spacetime that could connect two distant points, shortening travel time without the ship moving locally faster than light. A third proposal is a permanent track or altered spacetime pathway that would allow a ship to travel to a destination and return faster than light relative to an outside observer. Most warp and related shortcut theories require massive amounts of energy or "exotic

matter" with negative energy density, which we do not know how to create. I put my faith in Man evolving precisely what is needed.

Dark Energy

Under our present cosmological constructs, we only know the baryonic universe, which is 5% of all matter. We know little of dark matter⁴⁶ (27%) and literally nothing about dark energy (68%), both which our cosmic calculations affirm to exist.

Dark energy provides the propulsive energy for the expansion of the cosmos, balancing out the contracting pull of gravity at the rate of expansion. As the universe (spacetime) expands and creates new space, the total amount of dark energy increases proportionally, to maintain a constant density. It acts as an overall "resistance" to gravity,

In quantum mechanics, dark energy is visualised as virtual particles popping in and out of existence. The immediate problem is that calculations from quantum theory mismatch actual observations by an enormous margin (over 100 orders of magnitude). Theorists suggest that understanding dark energy requires successfully merging general relativity with quantum mechanics in the TOE. Dark energy constitutes another unknown underlying the Hawking hypothesis of our cosmological origins.

Multiverse Cosmos

In his final years of research (he died in 2018), Hawking said that rather than fixing the laws of physics as permanent rules from the very first instant, the laws of physics themselves emerge and evolve out of quantum fluctuations. Hawking also proposed a multiverse theory in which our universe is just one of many parallel universes created during the Big Bang. Instead of infinite variations of reality, the theory predicts that alternate universes within the multiverse share similar physical laws and do not vary drastically from our own. Hawking's visions still remain among the most influential.

Hawking is speculating even more widely here than on the origin of the cosmos; for both of these there are no scientific proofs.

Ex nihilo nihil fit

It has been pointed out that Hawking confused his case in saying the cosmos originated out of nothing. In fact he violated a foundational principle of science: "nothing from nothing ever yet was born" (*ex nihilo nihil fit*) (Lucretius). Matter and the natural laws must have been pre-existent, which requires further explanation of how they came to be.

They say he has confused the problem of Henry Ford, the internal combustion engine and the car. The last was not made by the internal combustion engine out of nothing, but by the design and actions of the first.

The same principle applies equally in metaphysics, independently of science. Somebody had to create matter, the laws of nature, the design of the cosmos, evolution and Man, and launch the whole from nothing, no matter how far back we go unravelling the processes,

All said and done, it still has to be proved that the cosmos originated out of nothing, and that a Supreme Being was not necessary.

Origin of Life

On his foundational thoughts on the origin of life, evolution and Man, Stephen Hawking said that biological evolution was a random process driven by chance, meaning there was no grand intelligence or divine designer involved in creating human life.

Evolution of Human Intelligence

⁴⁶ - We know it has mass, forms the large-scale structures of the universe and is invisible to light. We will not go further into it..

Hawking highlighted that "evolution is a random process, with intelligence as only one of a large number of possible outcomes".

Human intelligence was acquired and advanced through two distinct stages of evolution: slow biological evolution followed by rapid cultural evolution driven by externally transmitted information..

Hawking argued that humanity had recently broken away from this purely accidental biological process by introducing a new kind of "intelligence" into the equation: Hawking separated evolution into two distinct phases::

(1). Biological Evolution (The Darwinian Stage)

Hawking explained that human intelligence initially developed through natural selection . Over millions of years, random genetic mutations occurred in DNA. Some of these mutations provided a survival advantage—such as a larger brain capacity, complex problem-solving abilities, and the faculty for language. DNA changes at a rate of only about one bit per year . It took several million years for humans to evolve from apes.

. (2) . Cultural Evolution (The External Stage)

The true explosion of human intelligence came when humans bypassed the limitations of slow biological evolution by inventing written language .Human evolution and accumulated knowledge are handed down from generation to generation externally through written language and books , rather than just biologically through DNA. Hawking asserted that humans have entered a new stage called "self-designed evolution". We are actively using our own intelligence to redesign human DNA and bypass natural selection entirely.

Hawkins warned of The dangers of "New" Intelligence. Our own intelligence is about to create a dangerous new form of evolution:

. - Superhumans: he predicted that wealthy individuals would use genetic engineering to create enhanced "superhumans" with greater memory, disease resistance, and intelligence, leaving unimproved humans unable to compete.

. - Artificial Intelligence: Hawking feared that full Artificial Intelligence (AI) would become a new form of "living" system. Because AI can redesign itself at an ever-accelerating pace, it would completely outstrip the slow, biological evolution that brought humans into existence

I was surprised and pleased that, two decades apart and from our independent perspectives, Stephen Hawking and I arrived at the same conclusions about the current stage of Human evolution, namely in my case the Five Turning Points to a Knowledge Society, see the Preface to this book. Needless to say, we were not aware of each other's thoughts. While he failed to see where we might be heading, this book has some clearer thoughts on the subject.

On Abstract Thinking and Reasoning

Hawking believed that humanity's ability for abstract thought, reasoning and exploring the unknown is what truly elevates us as a species. While humans are physically insignificant, he held immense reverence for the vast power of the human mind. Hawking often highlighted while humans are small and fragile, yet intellectually, we are boundless. In a famous 1988 interview with Der Spiegel , he noted:

"We are just an advanced breed of monkeys on a minor planet of a very average star. But we can understand the Universe. That makes us something very special."⁴⁷

- Der Spiegel, 1988

⁴⁷ - <https://economictimes.indiatimes.com/magazines/panache/quote-of-the-day-by-stephen-hawking-we-are-just-an-advanced-breed-of-monkeys-on-a-minor-planet-of-a-very-average-star-/articleshow/126103458.cms?from=mdr>

On the Human Personality

Hawking rejected the idea of a supernatural personal identity. He explicitly stated that there is no reliable evidence for heaven, an afterlife, or a soul.

He strongly believed that our capacity for scientific inquiry, abstract mathematical models, and conceptualising things we cannot physically touch—like space-time curvature and black holes—is a superpower that distinguishes humanity.

He viewed the human imagination as a spark of wonder that allows anyone to explore the edge of cosmic knowledge, stating that the mind can conceive both the vastness of the heavens and the tiniest components of matter.

Hawking believed that pushing into the unknown is deeply rooted in human survival and evolution. He consistently urged humanity to look outward rather than turning inward..

On Morality

Stephen Hawking viewed morality and virtue not as divine commands or objective cosmic laws, but as deeply important human constructs shaped by evolution and logic. Instead, he approached ethics through the lens of scientific naturalism and human responsibility. His perspective on ethics can be broken down into three key ideas:

. (1). Morality as an Evolutionary Tool: Hawking argued that moral systems and societal values are rooted in biology and survival. Traits like altruism, cooperation, and empathy are evolutionary adaptations that allowed human communities to thrive and function.

. (2). Guided by Logic, Not Physics: Hawking separated the physical universe from human values. You cannot deduce how one should behave from the laws of physics. However, he believed that the logical and rational thinking utilised in mathematics and science should serve as a framework to guide human moral behaviour.

Criticism

Critics and philosophers pointed out that despite his dismissal of metaphysics, Hawking's own theories (such as proposing that gravity or quantum fluctuations explain why there is something rather than nothing) inherently relied on metaphysical and philosophical assumptions about existence, laws of nature, and reality. The bottom-line is that Hawking's propositions and points of view are themselves hypotheses: no scientific proofs.

Other Cosmologists – Christians and Deists

As the propositions of Hawking are still hypothetical and unproven, there have been and are many cosmologist who are deists.

Prominent Christian Cosmologists

Georges Lemaitre (1894–1966): A Belgian Catholic priest, physicist, and professor, Lemaitre was the first to propose the Big Bang Theory) using Einstein's equations of general relativity.

Don Page (1948 -): A prominent theoretical cosmologist and physicist who studied under Stephen Hawking, a devout evangelical Christian, famous for his work on quantum cosmology, black hole thermodynamics, and models of a bouncing universe.

George Ellis (1939 -): A world-renowned South African cosmologist and co-author of *The Large Scale Structure of Space-Time* with Stephen Hawking, a Quaker, who has written extensively on the compatibility of divine design and the "anthropic principle" (the idea that the universe appears fine-tuned for life).

Allan Sandage (1926–2010): Widely considered one of the most influential observational cosmologists of the 20th century (he precisely determined the age of the universe and the rate of its expansion). Sandage converted to Christianity later in life, stating that the sheer complexity and fine-tuning of the universe pointed towards a supernatural creator.

Krzysztof Meissner (1961 -): A Polish theoretical physicist and cosmologist known for his work in cyclic cosmology and conformal standard models, a practicing Catholic.

Prominent Deist Cosmologists

Paul Davies (1946 -): A British theoretical physicist, cosmologist, and astrobiologist, while Davies rejects traditional institutional Christianity and the idea of a personal, interventionist God, he openly defends Deism. He argues that the deeply elegant, fine-tuned mathematical laws governing the cosmos point to an "ingenious creator" who sets the universe in motion with a built-in purpose.

Sir Isaac Newton (1643–1727): Historically classified as a Christian (though with highly unconventional non-Trinitarian views), Newton viewed of the universe as a complex, orderly machine governed by mathematical laws that a creator set in motion.

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Evolutionary Biology Frontier

The Biological World of Richard Dawkins.

Richard Dawkins (1941-) is a British evolutionary biologist, zoologist, science communicator, noted atheist, author, and sometime professor of New College, Oxford in public understanding.

Dawkins has written a number of popular books explicating evolution. In the *Selfish Gene* (1976), he espoused the gene-centred view of evolution and coined the word "meme". The latter serves a cultural parallel to the biological gene. Just as genes pass down physical traits through DNA, memes pass down ideas, behaviors, and styles from person to person, acting as a self-replicating unit.

Evolutionary Biology

Richard Dawkins defines the core mechanism of evolutionary biology through a **gene-centered** view of evolution, famously stating in *The Selfish Gene* (1976) that "all life evolves by the differential survival of replicating entities". His reshapes the discipline across a few key definitions:

. (1). Evolution as the Propagating of Replicators: Dawkins argues that the primary unit of natural selection is not the individual organism or the species, but the gene. He defines natural selection as "the process whereby replicators out-propagate each other". Organisms, including humans, are merely temporary "survival machines" or vehicles built by genes to facilitate their replication.

. (2). Natural Selection Defined: To demystify the process of evolution and counter the idea that life arose purely by "chance," Dawkins provides a concise definition of natural selection, "non-random survival of random variants that encodes embryological recipes for that survival"

Human Intelligence

Dawkins views human intelligence as an extraordinary evolutionary adaptation shaped by natural selection to help organisms survive and reproduce in complex environments.

.(1) Product of Evolution: Intelligence is the result of billions of years of blind, mindless natural selection rather than any intentional or supernatural design.

. (2) Survival Tool: Like physical traits, human brains and cognitive abilities evolved because they gave our ancestors a clear advantage in the "game of life".

On Evolution

Dawkins explains that biological organisms look engineered, but this is an illusion. It is the result of cumulative selection. Unguided natural selection acts as a "blind" filter over generations. It builds complicated structures step-by-step without planning a final goal.

Nature requires no premeditated intelligence or foresight to produce functional complexity. Invoking an intelligent designer to solve the puzzle of biological complexity fails logically. It creates an infinite regress because an intelligent creator would require an even larger, unexplained explanation for its own prior complexity.

Dawkins promotes a form of scientism or strict empirical naturalism, arguing that empirical science is the primary—or sole—real torch-bearer for discovering objective truths about reality.

On Metaphysics and Philosophy

He has expressed deep scepticism towards metaphysics, arguing that empirical science has rendered traditional philosophical speculation obsolete. He viewed metaphysics as attempting to define things into existence without empirical evidence or scientific testing.

Dawkins approaches reality through a strict physicalist-materialist lens, asserting that life and the universe are completely explained by physical and biological laws (like natural selection) rather than metaphysical purposes or higher designs.

On Religion

Dawkins is an outspoken critic of religion which he views as a harmful cultural virus or meme that spreads uncritical acceptance of superstition over reason.

Dawkins is a prominent atheist. Along with Daniel Dennett, Christopher Hitchens and Sam Harris, he is known as one of the "Four Horsemen of New Atheism". He made the case for atheism in *The God Delusion* (2006), which major newspaper described as one of the 12 most influential books since the Second World War.

On Origin of the Cosmos

Dawkins' atheism relies on Hawking's hypothesis being proved.

The "Godless" World of Daniel Dennett

Daniel Clement Dennett III (1942-2024) was an American philosopher and cognitive scientist. His research centered on the philosophy of mind, the philosophy of science and the philosophy of biology, particularly as those fields relate to evolutionary biology and cognitive science.

Dennett was the co-director of the Center for Cognitive Studies and the Austin B. Fletcher Professor of Philosophy at Tufts University in Massachusetts. A vocal atheist and secularist, he was referred to as one of the "Four Horsemen of Atheism".

On Evolution

Daniel Dennett defined evolution by natural selection as a mindless, algorithmic process that generates design, order, and purpose from the bottom up without needing a prior designer.

As a philosopher rather than a biologist, Dennett treated evolution as a "**universal acid**"—an algorithmic process powerful enough to explain not just biological structures, but also the origins of consciousness, culture, morality, and meaning. His key concepts include:

. (1) The Algorithmic Process: Evolution is a mechanical, step-by-step procedure of replication, variation, and selection that is mindless yet inevitably produces complex results.

. (2) Competence Without Comprehension: Natural selection uncovers "reasons without a reason," meaning complex biological designs function purposefully long before any conscious mind exists to understand them.

. (3) Universal Acid: The logic of selection is not confined to biology; it spreads outward to explain language, human cognition, and cultural evolution (including memes).

. (4) Gradualism: Complex phenomena like minds, free will, and selves do not appear suddenly as a light switch; they build up through incremental evolutionary layers.

On the Human Mind

Dennett applies the algorithmic view of evolution to the human mind by arguing that human intelligence is a product of "competence without comprehension." He treats the human brain as a biological computer whose complex mental faculties were ground out over millennia by natural selection—a blind, substrate-neutral algorithm.

Dennett bridges the gap between mindless evolutionary algorithms and human consciousness through several core concepts:

. (1). Competence Without Comprehension

Before humans, billions of years of biological evolution produced incredibly complex, "competent" organisms (like bacteria or social insects) that could survive and replicate without ever understanding why or how they did so. Dennett argues that the human brain operates under the same fundamental rule. The mind is composed of billions of unthinking biological cogs (neurons) executing micro-algorithms. Human understanding does not precede competence; rather, comprehension is a late-stage effect built out of simpler, non-conscious evolutionary competencies.

. (2). The Mind as a "Turing Machine" Made of Memes

To explain the massive cognitive jump between animals and humans, Dennett relies on cultural evolution. He argues that human consciousness is essentially a virtual machine—software—running on the hardware of the biological brain. The substrate software is made of memes (units of cultural transmission like words, ideas, and habits). These invade the brain and undergo their own algorithmic natural selection. Language is the premier meme that transforms our parallel-processing biological brains into a serial-processing machine capable of self-reflection, planning, and structured thought.

. (3). The Multiple Drafts Model

Dennett uses his algorithmic framework to attack the idea of the "Cartesian Theater"—the illusion that there is a central "place" or an "I" inside the brain where everything comes together to be experienced by a soul. Instead, he proposes that the brain is a decentralised network where multiple sensory inputs and cognitive subsystems are constantly processing information in parallel. Different "drafts" of reality are edited, overwritten, and synthesized algorithmically at any given moment. There is no single moment when an event becomes "conscious"; there is only the ongoing, algorithmic stream of information processing.

. (4). Consciousness as a "User Illusion"

He defined the subjective experience we call consciousness as the brain's "user illusion." Just as the icons on a smartphone screen hide the matrix of computational circuitry, programming logic, and hardware underneath, human consciousness acts as a simplified internal interface. The evolutionary algorithm designed this interface because an organism does not need to understand its own neurochemistry to survive—it just needs a streamlined, highly functional summary of its internal and external states to navigate the world.

On Virtue and Morality

Daniel Dennett viewed virtue and morality as entirely natural phenomena evolved to make human civilisation possible.

. (1). Morality as an Evolved Technology:

Dennett argued that morality is one of civilisation's greatest inventions. The moral frameworks emerged through natural selection and cultural evolution (via memes). Evolutionary pressures initially forced early humans into cooperative behaviors. Over time, human reasoning and empathy allowed us to refine biological instincts into complex scalable rules. Dennett tracked this as real moral progress—the intentional widening of our "moral communities" from localised tribes to a global, cosmopolitan perspective.

. (2) . Virtue and "Moral Competence"

To Dennett, a virtuous or "morally competent" agent is someone whose cognitive systems are functional enough to participate reliably in the social contract. He outlined specific criteria for this state: (i) being moveable by reasons - the ability to pause, reflect, evaluate, and change one's mind based on evidence. (ii) fending off manipulation - a virtuous agent must be autonomous and skilled at detecting when other agents are trying to control or deceive them, and (iii) predictability and trust - virtue requires the cognitive flexibility to make promises, keep them, and accept accountability for outcomes.

. (3). A Consequentialist View of Accountability

Dennett was a compatibilist. He believed that even though the physical universe is deterministic, human free will and moral responsibility are still completely real and necessary. Without the cultural infrastructure of moral accountability, human society would collapse into a Hobbesian state of nature where life is "nasty, brutish, and short". However, he took a functional approach to praise and blame: we hold people accountable not because of absolute cosmic justice, but because holding people responsible works.

On Metaphysics

He rejected traditional armchair metaphysics that tried to deduce the nature of reality or consciousness independent of empirical science. He believed philosophy must stay grounded in and constrained by actual science.

He was a committed physicalist, arguing that all mental phenomena, intentionality, and consciousness are ultimately products of physical, mechanical brain processes.

Dennett held a pragmatist view of reality. In his concept of "real patterns," he argued that if an abstract pattern (like a belief, a centre of gravity, or a computer's strategy) lets us make reliable, real-world predictions, then it is objectively real—even if it isn't a fundamental particle.

On Origin of the Cosmos

Dennett's' atheism relies on Hawking's hypothesis being proved.

Other Evolutionary Biologists – Christians and Deists

Theistic Evolution

Many leading evolutionary biologists have identified themselves as Christians or Deists, along with their scientific contributions. They combined the theory of evolution with their religious beliefs and proposed the idea of 'Theistic Evolution':.

Here is how Christian biologists and theistic evolutionists build a scientific and philosophical basis to argue that evolution has direction and that humanity is an intended output:

. - 1. Evolutionary Convergence

Christian biologists frequently point to **evolutionary convergence** as scientific evidence that evolution is not completely random or blind.

Evolutionary convergence occurs when unrelated organisms independently evolve similar traits to solve the same biological problems (eg. the camera-like eyes of humans and octopuses developed completely independently).

They argue that the physical and biological laws of the universe restrict evolutionary paths. Because the environment and physics demand specific solutions, life is channelled down predictable routes.

This suggests that the emergence of complex, intelligent, and conscious life (like humans) was highly probable, if not inevitable, rather than a blind fluke.

. - 2. Fine-Tuning and Biocentric Laws

Christian scientists argue that the biological mechanism of evolution does not happen in a vacuum. It relies on a highly precise set of physical laws.

The laws of chemistry and physics are perfectly "fine-tuned" to allow for carbon-based life, complex proteins, and DNA replication. They argue that a "blind" process cannot exist without a highly structured, orderly playing field. Therefore, the framework that makes evolution possible shows signs of deliberate, objective design.

. - 3. Teleology (Purpose) via Theistic Evolution

The natural laws were designed from the very beginning with the built-in potential to naturally give rise to intelligent life. They argue that it looks more like "functional integrity".

From an outside perspective, it may look random (mutations), but from a theological perspective, the process is sustaining a specific, intended objective: humanity.

Christian biologists do not reject the science of evolution; they reject the *philosophical deduction* that because evolution involves random mutations, the entire universe is meaningless. By pointing to evolutionary predictability (convergence) and the fine-tuning of biological laws, they argue that human existence is a planned, objective output of a finely calibrated system.

Prominent Christian evolutionary biologists

. - **Theodosius Dobzhansky (1900-1975)**: A staunch Russian Orthodox Christian, he was one of the most important creators of the Modern Synthesis theory, ie, merged Charles Darwin's theory of natural selection with Gregor Mendel's genetics. He defined evolution as changes in allele frequencies within a gene pool

. - **Francis Collins (1950 -)**: Renowned geneticist who led the Human Genome Project. He is an evangelical Christian. He has written a book called *The Language of God* about the harmony of science and spirituality. Director of the National Institutes of Health (NIH), from 2009 to 2021 under three US presidents.

. - **Ronald Fisher (1890-1962)**: Known as the father of modern statistics and population genetics, he was a staunch Anglican Christian who combined Darwin's theory of natural selection with Mendel's laws of heredity.

. - **Asa Gray (1810-1888)**: A famous 19th-century American botanist. A close friend of Charles Darwin, he actively supported and disseminated Darwin's theory of evolution in America. He was a staunch Presbyterian Christian.

. - **Pierre Teilhard de Chardin (1881–1955)**: A French Jesuit Catholic priest, archaeologist, palaeontologist, geologist, philosopher and visionary who sought to synthesise Christian theology with the theory of evolution. He proposed evolution of the "noosphere" (the digital age and the knowledge society) before his time, and the "Omega Point" as Man's immortal destiny.

. - **Simon Conway Morris (1951 -)**: A staunch Christian, a renowned palaeontologist and evolutionary biologist at the University of Cambridge. Known for his studies of the Cambrian Explosion and Evolutionary Convergence. His research extends to astrobiology and extraterrestrial life

Prominent Deists evolutionary biologists

.- **Charles Darwin** : Charles Darwin , who gave the world the theory of evolution, was a Christian in his youth. but by the time he wrote *On the Origin of Species* he was became a deist,. (However, towards the end of his life he declared himself an Agnostic.)

The Human-Centred Sciences Frontier

Scientific Ontology

The current frontiers of scientific thought focus heavily on what is increasingly referred to as the (non-theistic)“ontology of the empirical sciences” While the latter use analytical tools to unpack what reality fundamentally entails, the philosophers cogitate the metaphysical implications of their findings.

There has been a major shift of interest, moving inquiry into everyday human structures. They now study the objective reality of social phenomena. Researchers analyse the ontology of race, gender, money, and disability, to understand socially constructed phenomena.

A new focus explores the concept of metaphysical grounding, what makes a fact or entity true or exist by looking for its foundational basis - how mental states are grounded in physical states.

Advanced work explores whether consciousness is a fundamental, irreducible feature of the universe (as in panpsychism) or if it emerges from purely material interactions.

At the margins of reality, advanced work explores the nature of possible worlds, counterfactuals, and the ultimate boundaries of necessity, and the debate between presentism (only the present exists) and eternalism (past, present, and future all exist).

In their empirical work, scientist are increasingly driven by and converge on common new perspectives. There is parallel thinking for instance, merging the human, the sociological, the political and even the environmental into moral and philosophic relevance. Much of the scientific conclusions are in fact metaphysical in nature. They suggest philosophical conclusions based on empirical understandings as alternatives to traditional metaphysics. The lines distinguishing the scientist and metaphysician are increasingly blurred. In fact, in the “non-theistic” environment, the philosopher has become an equal partner.

Collective Consciousness

In the 21st century, thought on **identity** and **responsibility** is defined by the tension between individualism, interconnectedness, and a growing demand for collective systemic accountability. Thinkers emphasise collective, the fluid, socially constructed selves alongside the individual ethical duty to address global, planetary crises. Major contemporary frameworks include:

.- **The "Networked Self"** : Rooted in contemporary philosophy and digital sociology, this view posits that identity is no longer a singular, fixed essence. Instead, it is a fluid network of curated, interchangeable identities. Responsibility here requires active, conscious self-authorship, balancing the freedom to self-define with the interpersonal obligations required to maintain authentic digital and physical communities.

.- **Relational Autonomy & Identity Politics** : Rejecting isolated individualism, this stream argues that identity is shaped by social, historical, and cultural contexts. It reframes responsibility as a matter of **social justice**, where individuals and institutions hold an ethical obligation to recognise, include, and repair historical disenfranchisement.

.- Planetary & Posthuman Ethics : Contemporary eco-philosophy argues that human identity cannot be separated from the natural world or technology. Responsibility here expands beyond human-to-human contracts to include stewardship of the Earth and ethical design of emerging technologies.

.- The "Age of Responsibility" : This modern political philosophy examines how notions of meritocracy and personal choice have been weaponised. It scrutinises the boundary between what is within an individual's control (personal accountability) and systemic factors (structural responsibility), shaping modern debates on welfare and human rights.

Cognitive Sciences

The Cognitive sciences is the interdisciplinary study of the individual mind and its intelligence. It investigates how the brain processes information by exploring mental faculties like perception, memory, reasoning, and language.

Central to cognitive science is the "computational theory of mind," which suggests that thinking can be understood as computational operations performed on mental representations. It studies how the brain stores information (eg, as symbols, concepts, or neural networks). It studies how the brain manipulates that information to make decisions, solve problems, or form emotions.

Neuroscience

The primary thought streams defining modern neuroscience include:

1. Systems & Computational Neuroscience

- .- The Brain as a Computer: The field focuses on how neurons communicate in vast networks.
- .- Theory & Modelling: Researchers use complex algorithms, artificial intelligence (AI), and massive datasets to simulate brain functions and explain how thoughts and behaviors arise
- .- Large-Scale Mapping: Initiatives like the BRAIN Initiative have paved the way for "Connectomics," to completely map the structural and functional pathways of the brain.

2. Body-Brain Connection

- .- This stream posits that thoughts, emotions, and physical bodily states are deeply intertwined, meaning our physical experiences directly shape how we make decisions.

3. The Rebirth of Consciousness Research

Neuroscientists are aggressively tackling the "hard problem" of how the physical brain gives rise to subjective experience. Two prominent theories dominate this space:

- .- Integrated Information Theory (IIT): Argues that consciousness is a fundamental property of any physical system that holds a high degree of integrated, irreducible information.
- .- Global Workspace Theory (GWT): Views the brain as a theatre where information is temporarily broadcast to a "global workspace" (making it conscious), while the vast majority of processing remains unconscious..

Abstract Thinking

Abstract thinking is the ability to look beyond the literal, physical here-and-now. It involves processing intangible concepts, recognizing hidden patterns, and understanding complex "big picture" ideas that cannot be directly touched or seen.

Abstract thinking about non-physical components (like numbers, justice, or algorithms) is validated through internal logical consistency, intersubjective utility, and conceptual grounding. Because these entities lack physical mass, they cannot be measured in a lab, but they are still evaluated by rigorous rules and real-world outcomes. Validating non-physical abstractions relies on specific philosophical and psychological frameworks. The new scientific parameters are themselves non-physical, crossing common ground into those of metaphysics:

- .- **Cognitive Frameworks:** Cognitive science (and philosophy) define abstraction as identifying core, repeating patterns in complex data to discard irrelevant specifics.

.- **Logical Coherence:** Ideas must follow the strict rules of deduction. If a conclusion logically and necessarily follows from your accepted premises, the argument is deductively valid.

.- **Empirical Utility and Metaphor:** Non-physical entities are often grounded in physical experiences. For example, a "social network" (a non-physical entity) is abstracted into concrete terms to map data or predict human behaviour.

.- **Intersubjective Agreement:** If multiple independent minds can use the same abstract rules and arrive at the same predictable outcomes, the concept has validity. This is how complex mathematics and legal codes function.

Abstract thinking can conceptualize and provide philosophical arguments for God, but it cannot definitively "discover" or prove God as a physical fact. While logic can point to a creator or a first cause, discovering the reality of God typically requires personal faith, intuition, or spiritual experience.

Free Will

In the 21st century, the free will debate has shifted from purely abstract philosophy to an intense dialogue with cognitive science, physics, and evolutionary biology. Three main streams of thought dominate the discussion: biological determinism, compatibilism, and stochastic agency.

1. Hard Determinism / Neuroscientific Scepticism

This stream argues that advances in neuroscience and genetics prove our choices are simply the inevitable result of prior causes—our biology, environment, and physical laws. The argument is that because every brain state is preceded by a physical precursor, our feeling of "conscious will" is an illusion. This perspective questions traditional morality and the justice system, arguing that people do not "deserve" praise or punishment if they could not have done otherwise.

2. Modern Compatibilism

Compatibilists argue that free will and determinism can logically coexist. This stream focuses on our capacity to make rational decisions based on our own internal desires, even if those desires are physically caused. The Argument: is that if the universe is entirely physical, humans are still "free agents" in the ways that matter. We possess "free will worth wanting," which is the ability to navigate the world, self-correct, and take moral responsibility for our actions.

3. Stochastic Agency & The New Science of Volition

Bridging biology and philosophy, this stream incorporates chaos theory and quantum mechanics to argue that the universe (and our brains) are not rigidly predictable. The argument is that our brains do not passively wait for unconscious triggers. Instead, the brain naturally fluctuates with baseline neural "noise," and our conscious minds weigh in to tip the balance. This grants us real, organic agency and allows us to control our destinies over time.

Good and Bad

Traditional notions of absolute universal moral "good" and "evil" are heavily debated. Modern philosophy trends towards the privative view of evil and moral relativism. Right and wrong are increasingly defined by situational awareness and the collective consequences of our actions on future generations rather than strict moral dogma.

In the 21st century, thought streams on "good" and "bad" are largely shaped by existential risks, rapid technological progress, and a highly interconnected global society. Philosophers, ethicists, and cultural theorists typically analyse these concepts through lenses like Transhumanism, Effective Altruism, and Eco-philosophy.

.- **Transhumanism:** Focuses on the "good" of using technology (AI, biotechnology, cybernetics) to overcome human limitations like aging and disease. The "bad" (or existential risk) centres on loss of control over autonomous artificial intelligence or severe inequality.

.- **Effective Altruism:** A data-driven ethical movement focusing on the "good" by asking: "How can we do the most good possible?" using evidence and reason. It prioritises global health, poverty alleviation, and preventing artificial superintelligence.

.- **Digital Humanism & Ethics:** Focuses on the "bad" inherent in the internet and surveillance capitalism. Thinkers in this stream critique how algorithms, echo chambers, and the attention economy exploit our psychology and divide societies.

.- **Eco-philosophy** (The Anthropocene): A stream that frames "good" as sustainability, ecological balance, and living within Earth's limits. "Bad" is seen as human-driven climate change and the depletion of planetary resources.

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Other Science Communities

The Mathematical World of Alain Badiou

Alain Badiou, (1937 -) is a French mathematician- philosopher, formerly chair of Philosophy at the Ecole Normale Supérieure and founder of the faculty of Philosophy of the Université de Paris. His work is heavily informed the applications of mathematics, in particular set theory and category theory, and defined by a rejection of linguistic relativism seen as typical of postwar French thought. Unlike his peers, Badiou believes in the idea of universalism – and truth.

Mathematics, like logic, lies in the middle-ground between the empirical and the abstract. If we group mathematicians with science, here we have an example of a scientist who is also a philosopher.

Alain Badiou argues that ontology (the study of being) is purely mathematical, thereby eliminating any need for a supreme being, a theology of the One, or a traditional God. Badiou famously asserts that "mathematics is ontology". He argues that what exists is not a unified "One," but rather pure, unstructured multiplicity.

In set theory, every set is built up from the empty set (the void). Badiou defines the void as the "proper name of being"—the foundation less base of all situations that precedes any "count-as-one".

Badiou uses set theory to claim that infinity is completely immanent to being itself. There is no single supreme infinity or "One-infinity" (God); instead, there is only a horizontal "infinity of infinities".

Because set theory shows that every multiple is just composed of other multiples without a final, unifying apex, a supreme being or ultimate "One" is structurally impossible.

For Badiou, formal mathematics proves that God is truly dead because being is structurally multiple and infinite all the way down, rendering a creator deity redundant and mathematically incoherent.

The Sub-atomic World

The quantum revolution has taken us very far into the sub-atomic or nano world. We have even (once) detected the boson, the elementary particle that transmits gravity, and with the quantum computer we are technologising the unique behavioural features of sub-atomic matter. But, there is much more to go.

Stephen Hawking's contribution has been to apply what we already know to probe the very beginnings of the cosmos. In fact he hypothesises that it began with the inherent quantum level perturbations of matter. But he says that until we have a complete Theory of Everything (TOE) we are unable to conclude how things began from nothing, Science is still not able to fit in the role of gravity. I have not detected any new discoveries for the present, We must leave matters as they are.

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Chapter Ten

Outcome of Philosophic Review

Multiple Philosophies Scenario

While the core or classical meaning of philosophy is the “search for truth”, we might remind ourselves that, in this study we use the term as the search for the proper “way of life”. It is to be established on the basis of one’s understandings of metaphysics and science.

Up to modern times, philosophy has been searching for truth in the metaphysical domain. The prime (only) proposition of the latter has been the God-option. The metaphysical stream does not to my knowledge have a “no-God” scenario with a corresponding no-God (or atheist) philosophy or way of life. The God-option is however unprovable to exist or not exist, by anybody. Accepting it depends on belief.

Accepting the God-option normally leads to affiliation with the philosophy of a religion. But this need not be so. Believers without a religion would be a deist or theist, who could have different philosophies of life depending on what else they put together as the Purpose of Man. The latter could be temporal or immortal.

The atheist or no-God- -option emerged with the scientific revolution, the rise of empiricism, and generally as a reaction to over-selling of the God-option - as explained in the preceding chapter on Scientific Review. In an atheist world, with still fervid wide-ranging exploration going on at this stage, there can be multiple philosophies of life. But they would be temporal-bound.

Philosophy is NOT dead!

Far from being dead, philosophy is the central need and pre-occupation of everyone. It is the non-theistic-option of evolution that has yet to come alive with a credible unifying philosophy.

Fortunately, today mankind operates collectively by democratic consensus. Happily also, on an individual basis, we are in a position to pursue all options and are (should be) free to make our choices. For as long as destiny is accepted as an individual thing, this is a landmark evolutionary achievement.

To categorially conclude that there is no God-option at this juncture could be tantamount to a blind step. We are on the point of becoming a Knowledge Society. While we have no reason to expect to see Beyond Materiality, we can at least hope our wider grasps of reality will put us into a better position to target our destiny

Active Philosophic Fronts.

The modern view is that the ultimate test of a model is not whether it matches an invisible, independent reality, but whether its prescriptions accurately connect the elements of the model to actual measurements, observations and needs – and produces happiness.

In the previous chapter, we have seen that the scientific community have pretty much taken on the mantle to find new fundamentals for determining non-theistic philosophy. Much of the time, they bypass metaphysics and are themselves philosophers. At the moment, their theories swamp the scene.

Our review in this chapter shows that the orthodox philosophic community have in turn been influenced by the expanding scientific understandings and taking into account empirical knowledge to find new metaphysical directions, not necessarily God-options.

The strength of the scientist -philosopher is that he is grounded in realities. His weakness, if an atheist or agnostic, will be not tying up with parallel thought in the metaphysics, or indeed with the religious domain.

Philosophies are intended to be applied to life in the societal domain, and in principle should be as widely based as possible. Pure philosophers tend to do that better. Happily, the latter are these days fishing around in scientific waters for relevant inputs.

The religious or God-option people are also re-tooling their ideas in the light of science. How things will pan out remains to be seen in the Knowledge Society of tomorrow.

Belief Profile of Philosophers

The Metaphysical Issues remain framed between science and religion, and are dependent on belief. The latter emerges in turn as the central factor (evidence) in the balance.

Scientifically, a belief is the brain's way of representing reality, formed by neural pathways that encode experiences, emotions, and logical data. It functions as a survival mechanism, allowing man to assign meaning to his surroundings, predict outcomes, and guide behaviour.

In fact, much of the time, scientific theorising is in unproven territory. Belief plays a significant part in the acceptance of their hypothesis.

The PhilPapers Survey 2020 on **Philosophers**⁴⁸ was conducted online in October- November of that year. Of the main target population of 7685 philosophers, 1785 (23%) completed the survey, and 925 completed all 100 questions. Of the 1768 who responded to the question "Accept or lean towards God", some 18.9% pointed to Theism (Deism), while 66.9% pointed towards Atheism, and some 14% were categorised as Others.

Compared to a similar 2009 survey, there was an increase of 4.25% in Deism, and decreases of 5.9% in Atheism and 1.4% in Others. The Phil survey on philosophers was more limited and extremely technical (well worth looking at). The Pew surveys were wider and straight-forward on the issues.

In today's evolving context, philosophers can be said to be the most **open-minded** (sceptical) of the categories of human thinkers. They may yet have the clearest minds to bring about much needed syntheses down the line..

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Analytic and Continental Philosophy

Continental and Analytical Philosophy shared a common Western philosophical tradition up to Immanuel Kant

In the 20th-century, philosophy was influenced by geographic and cultural differences. The tradition of clear logical analysis was inaugurated by the English-speaking world, whereas a speculative and broadly historical tradition held sway on the European continent. These formed the mainstreams.

Other significant currents included Marxism, practiced from the early 20th century in parts of central Europe, Russia and Latin America, and currently dominant in China, and the newly emergent Human Behavioural stream.

Continental Philosophy

⁴⁸ - <https://doi.org/10.3998/phimp.2109>

Continental philosophy covers a broad range of philosophical views. Nonetheless, certain descriptive features typically characterise continental philosophy:

- First, continental philosophers generally reject scientism, the view that the natural sciences are the best or most accurate way of understanding all phenomena.
- Second, continental philosophy considers experience is determined at least partly by factors such as context, space and time, language, culture, or history. Thus continental philosophy tends toward historicism, where analytic philosophy tends to treat philosophy in terms of discrete problems, capable of being analysed apart from their historical origins.
- Third, continental philosophers tend to take a strong interest in the unity of theory and practice, and tend to see their philosophical inquiries as closely related to personal, moral, or political transformation.
- Fourth, continental philosophy has an emphasis on meta-philosophy (i.e. the study of the nature, aims, and methods of philosophy). This emphasis can also be found in analytic philosophy, but with starkly different results.

Continental philosophy encompasses a range of European traditions

- Phenomenology. Examines the structures of consciousness and how we experience the world, human existence, and the question of Being .
- Existentialism. Emphasises radical freedom, and the idea that our existence precedes our essence; humans must metaphysically create their own meaning.
- Deconstruction & Post-Structuralism. Challenges stable metaphysical categories (like truth, identity, or origin) by showing that all concepts are fluid, constructed, and rely on opposing terms that constantly shift.
- Speculative Realism/Object-Oriented Ontology. A movement arguing that objects and realities exist independently of human access.

In Continental philosophy, metaphysics is broadly understood as the study of Being, but being as it is lived, interpreted, and understood through human existence, rather than analysed via logic or abstract thought experiments. Rather than asking what the universe is scientifically made of, continental metaphysicians focus on how things show up to us and shape our subjective reality.

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Edmund Husserl (Father of Phenomenology)

Phenomenology is a philosophical study and movement that took shape in the hands of Edmund Husserl (1859-1938), an Austrian German mathematical philosopher.

Phenomenology aims to arrive at an objective understanding of the world via the discovery of universal logical structures in human subjective experience

In his mature work, he sought to develop a systematic foundational science based on the so-called phenomenological reduction.

Arguing that transcendental consciousness sets the limits of all possible knowledge, Husserl defined phenomenology as a transcendental-idealist philosophy.

Phenomenology seeks to **objectively** investigate the nature of subjective, conscious experience. It attempts to describe the universal features of consciousness while avoiding assumptions about the external world, aiming to describe phenomena as they appear, and to explore the meaning and significance of lived experience.

This approach, while philosophical, has found many applications in qualitative research across different scientific disciplines, especially in the social and human sciences, including cognitive science and health science.

All the different branches of phenomenology share the common foundational approach of phenomenological inquiry; that is, investigating things just as they appear, independent of any particular theoretical framework.

Husserl's thought profoundly influenced the 20th century and he remains a notable figure in contemporary philosophy and beyond..

Analytic Philosophy

Analytic philosophy has been dominant since the second half of the 20th century. Central figures in its history include Bertrand Russell (1872–1970) an atheist, G. E. Moore (1873-1958) and agnostic, and Ludwig Wittgenstein (1889-1981) with no specific beliefs but was engaged lifelong with the religious as a real human phenomenon.

Analytic philosophy is a broad school of thought, essentially anglophone, with an emphasis on analysis, clear prose, rigorous argument, formal logic, mathematics, and the natural sciences. Analytic metaphysics applies the tools of logical analysis and linguistic clarity to traditional metaphysical questions. It is further characterised by a concern with language and meaning.

Today analytic philosophers debate how objects persist through time, is an object fully present at every moment it exists, is an object in a four-dimensional "space-time, whether free will can coexist with a causally determined physical universe, and question whether "redness" is a real entity or just a linguistic label, and the ontological principle that for every true statement, there must be something in reality that makes it true,

The relationship between analytical philosophy and traditional metaphysics is dynamic, having evolved from early hostility to a vibrant, rigorous resurgence.

Features of analytical philosophy included the following”

- . - Creation of Modern Mathematical Logic.

- . - Theory of Descriptions and Logical Atomism. Bertrand Russell formulated the idea that the world consists of a collection of independent atomic facts and that complex propositions can be broken down into elementary propositions and truth functions.

- . - Philosophy of Language and the "Linguistic Turn". Analytical philosophy shifted towards how language represents reality. Wittgenstein emphasised how meaning is tied to ordinary usage and social context.

- . - Logical Positivism and the Verification Principle This principle is that a statement is only cognitively meaningful if it is either empirically verifiable or a tautology (logically true by definition), which sidelined traditional metaphysics.

After the mid-20th century, analytical philosophy expanded past strict empiricism leading a renaissance in metaphysics, epistemology, and modal logic.

Anthropological Holism

Anthropological holism is the contemporary foundational approach that views human culture, biology, history, and language as interconnected parts of a unified whole rather than as separate, isolated elements. It attempts to unify disparate ways of understanding behaviour of humans as both creatures of their social environment and creators of their own values. The core concepts are:

- . - Anthropological Holism is the study of living human societies, customs, beliefs, and social behaviors.

. -Biological (Physical) Anthropology is the study of human evolution, genetics, and adaptation over time.

. – Archaeology is the investigation of past human cultures through physical remains and material artifacts.

. - Linguistic Anthropology is the study of how language shapes social life, identity, and communication.

By utilising a holistic view, anthropology avoids reductionism (simplifying complex human behaviors down to a single cause, like genetics or economics alone). While cultural or physical anthropology uses scientific methods to study specific societies and biological traits, philosophical anthropology synthesises those findings to understand human existence as a whole.

Philosophical anthropology emerged as a distinct, formal academic discipline in 1920s in Germany seeking to bridge philosophy and the emerging natural and social sciences. It arose as an outgrowth of among other things phenomenology, which draws its energy from methodical reflection on human experience (first person perspective) and from the philosopher's own personal experience.

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The New Face of Philosophy

Peter (PMS) Hacker:
(Anthropological Philosophy: Study of Human Nature)

Peter Michael Stephen Hacker, a British philosopher (1954 – 2021) is best known for his four-volume collection of books on human nature. He is a signal of a new synthesis in our philosophic quest.

He believes that empirical observation and research is a categorically distinct kind of activity from conceptual investigation and clarification, even though there is sometimes no sharp dividing lines between the two. These are two different kinds of intellectual activity, which may be conducted by the same person.

There are problems, only not empirical ones, conceptual problems and puzzlements that are to be dissolved or resolved by logico-linguistic analysis. Scientific inquiry can no more help to resolve them than discoveries in physics can help to prove a mathematical theorem.

He presents a comprehensive alternative view of human nature, integrating the philosophical theories of Aristotle and Ludwig Wittgenstein. Herewith his Tetralogy on Human Nature (A Study of Human Nature):

The inaugural volume maps out the foundational, structural concepts of what it means to be human. Hacker attacks the modern mind-body problem. He argues that a human being is a whole material substance with purposive capacities, rather than an internal, isolated "mind" trapped inside a brain or physical container.

The second volume challenges cognitive neuroscientists who attribute psychological attributes (like "thinking" or "knowing") to the physical brain rather than the human being as a whole. This is followed by detailed logico-grammatical studies of human cognitive and cogitative powers,

The third volume explores the affective dimension of human life—how we feel and connect. It offers a deep dive into human emotions, examining pride, shame, envy, jealousy, anger, love, friendship, and sympathy.

The final book concludes by focusing on our practical moral lives, values, and eventual mortality. Key subjects include good and evil, virtue and vice, freedom vs. determinism, responsibility, pleasure, happiness, and finding meaning in life amidst the inevitability of death.

The following quotation provides as succinct a perspective on Hacker's contribution as I can find:

"Peter Hacker is the creator of the original version of Analytic Philosophical Anthropology. His anthropology is based on criticism of Cartesian dualism and physicalism, which underlie modern neurosciences and which he tries to overcome on the basis of Wittgenstein's philosophical 'logotherapy'..

The conceptual framework of his holistic anthropology is a rethought conceptual scheme of the Ordinary language philosophy. Hacker considers consciousness not as a separate mental reality, but one of the powers of human nature – an intellectual ability, which, along with emotional (passionate) and moral, belongs to a person as an integral socio-biological being. Asserting the free will of man, the Oxford thinker criticizes various forms of determinism, especially its most common form in modern science – neurobiological determinism, which is built on false philosophical foundations. This criticism allows the modern British philosopher to build an original, systematic and logically consistent anthropological concept that asserts the immutability of the highest human values – goodness, love and happiness."

Analytical Anthropology of Peter Hacker
V. Y. Popov, Vasyli' Stus Donetsk National University, Ukraine
<https://ampr.ust.edu.ua/article/view/249601>

Philosophical inquiry is therefore very different from scientific inquiry, and Hacker maintains that: "philosophy is not a contribution to human knowledge, but to human understanding."

The main points of Hacker's philosophical contributions are as follows:

- . Hacker rejects Cartesian dualism and materialism. His argument is that it is wrong to attribute to a part of the human being, the "brain", the abilities such as thinking, perceiving, and decision-making that are applicable only to the whole human being. The brain does not think, the human being thinks.

- . - Man is a complete socio-biological being, consisting of body, intellect, emotion, and morality. Consciousness is not a mystical world beyond the body or a chemical change in the brain; it is an intellectual power of human nature.

- .- The Importance of Ordinary Language (Ordinary Language Philosophy), following Wittgenstein's lead, he believes that philosophical dilemmas can only be resolved by clearly understanding the rules of the language we use in everyday life.

- .- Championing human freedom and the highest values, he rejects the scientific argument that all human activities are already neurologically determined (Neurobiological Determinism). Hacker affirms that humans have moral responsibility and free will. His philosophy emphasises that the ultimate goals of human life, such as love, goodness, and happiness, are unchanging.

In short, Peter Hacker's philosophy teaches us to see humans not as mere brains or souls, but as complete human beings who live, speak, and feel in this world

Peter Hacker is what I would call a new-generation metaphysician-philosopher. Besides the physical, there are additional layers of observable realities, in particular behavioural experience, and in fact a new understanding of language as well, which need to be included. The sciences and metaphysics are complementary disciplines. He subscribes to no faith in particular.

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Alvin Carl Plantinga

Alvin Carl Plantinga (1932 -) is an American analytic philosopher and theologian. He is the John A. O'Brien Professor of Philosophy Emeritus at the University of Notre Dame and a professor emeritus of philosophy at Calvin University. His most influential works were: *God and Other Minds* (1967), *The Nature of Necessity* (1974), and *Warranted Christian Belief* (2000) — the latter a part of the "Warrant Trilogy".

[Theory of Warrant](#)

Alvin Plantinga's Warrant Trilogy is a landmark three-volume series in analytic epistemology published between 1993 and 2000. Through these books, he shaped a major component of Reformed epistemology, introducing a theory known as **proper functionalism** to replace traditional internalist theories of knowledge.

Plantinga defines **warrant** as that precise quality or quantity which, when added to a true belief, turns it into actual knowledge.

Plantinga argues that some people can know that God exists as a **basic belief** requiring no argument.

Plantinga went on to develop a more comprehensive epistemological account of the nature of warrant which allows for the existence of God as a basic belief. Alvin Plantinga's theory of warrant defines what turns a true belief into knowledge. In a nutshell, a belief has warrant if and only if:

. (1) **Proper Function**: It is produced by cognitive faculties that are functioning properly (free of any malfunction).

. (2) **Designed Environment**: It occurs in a cognitive environment that matches the one for which those faculties were designed. And

. (3) **Aim at Truth**: It follows a design plan that is successfully aimed at producing true beliefs rather than false ones.

Plantinga applies this framework to Christian belief (the "Aquinas/Calvin model"):

. (1) Properly Basic: Belief in God can be properly basic —meaning it does not need to be proven by outside evidence or logical arguments—just like basic beliefs in sensory perception or memory.

. (2) Sensus Divinitatis: Humans possess an innate God-implanted cognitive capacity that spontaneously generates beliefs about God when triggered by the world.

. (3) De Jure Vs. De Facto: Plantinga argues that critics asking whether Christian belief is intellectually acceptable (de jure) are really just smuggling in the claim that it is false (de facto). If Christianity is true and humans were designed by God, then Christian beliefs possess full warrant

In relation to evolution, Plantinga makes the subtle point (if I got him right) that Man's cognitive faculties are part of his tools of both survival and progression, and therefore trustworthy. There are no grounds to dismiss as false if they "sense" something like the existence of a Prime Mover or God - which is the prevailing human experience.

Reformed epistemology

Plantinga is a Calvinist Christian and a member of the Dutch Reformed Church. He is a leading figure in the Reformed epistemology movement. Central to Reformed epistemology is the proposition that belief in God may be a "proper basis" and not need to be inferred from other truths to be rationally warranted.

Vision

The "prophetic" vision or perspicuity of Plantinga is focusing on **belief** as a separate evolved faculty – however one associates it with survival. My own view is that we need to turn our own new empirical tools on the genesis, causes and mechanics of this faculty. It lies in the middle-ground where we might find the missing connections between the empirical and the metaphysical. I **believe** (here we go, Plantinga!) that belief is the thinking mate of reason, and the forward "feeler" of evolution. We shall in time need it to explore the nano world and "the nothing" beyond the cosmos, and may need the aid of belief

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Richard Swinburne

Richard Swinburne (1934 -) is a leading British philosopher and emeritus professor at the University of Oxford. His philosophy was primarily Analytic Philosophy using its methods to scientifically and logically justify Christian theology and the existence of God.

A summary of his main philosophical principles is given below:

. - 1. The Probabilistic Case for God To this end, he brought Bayes' Theorem, which is used in science, into philosophy. The separate lines of evidence—Cosmological, Teleological/Fine-tuning, and Consciousness—each increase the possibility of God's existence. He argues that when all this evidence is taken together, there is a greater than 50% probability (>0.5) that God exists than that God does not exist.

In science, when there are multiple explanations for a phenomenon, the simplest explanation is accepted. Similarly, Swinburne argues that the explanation of "one omnipotent God" is more simple and logical than the multiple reasons for the laws behind the complex organization of the universe.

. - 2 Substance Dualism Every human being is made up of two distinct elements: the physical body and the immaterial soul. He argues that changes in the human brain alone cannot determine a person's personal identity; the soul is responsible for a person's true identity and state of consciousness.

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Alasdair Chalmers MacIntyre

Alasdair Chalmers MacIntyre (1929 – 2025) was a Scottish-American philosopher who contributed to moral and political philosophy, as well as the history of philosophy and theology. He was a senior research fellow at the Centre for Contemporary Aristotelian Studies in Ethics and Politics at London Metropolitan University, emeritus Professor of Philosophy at the Notre Dame, and permanent senior distinguished research fellow at the Notre Dame de Nicola Center for Ethics and Culture.

Here is a summary of his philosophy:

. - Moral Fragmentation: MacIntyre argues that the modern world has lost its moral language. The moral concepts we use today are fragmented fragments of the past, making it difficult to reach a common understanding in moral debates.

. - Restoration of Virtue Ethics: He rejects modern philosophies such as Deontology and Utilitarianism. Instead, he calls for a return to the Virtue Ethics of Aristotle and Thomas Aquinas. He believes that a person can live a well-being only by cultivating virtue and virtues.

. - Practices: Virtues are not something individual. They are cultivated through collective activities (sports, science, art, etc.). The purpose of human life is to achieve the inherent benefits within these activities

. - Narrative Unity of Human Life: Human life should be seen as a complete story. To understand who we are and what our purpose is, we need to connect our lives to the story of our past and the society we live in.

. - Communitarianism: He criticises individualism as separating humans from society. A person derives his moral identity from the society, tradition, and culture in which he lives.

In short, MacIntyre's philosophy asserts that "to escape modern moral dilemmas, we must return to the virtues and to traditional community-based life." MacIntyre intends the idea of virtue to supplement, rather than replace, moral rules. Indeed, he describes certain moral rules as 'unconditional'.

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Karol Wojtyła

Karol Józef Wojtyła, (1920 – 2005), Polish, was Pope John Paul II, canonised as a saint in 2014. A philosopher in his own right, he reflected the core responses of the contemporary mainstream God-option philosophy.

In his encyclical *Fides et Ratio* (On the Relationship between Faith and Reason), 1988, John Paul promoted an autonomous pursuit of truth in theological matters. He described the mutually supporting relationship between faith and reason and emphasised that theologians should focus on that relationship.

Reason needs faith to avoid falling into scepticism or despair, while faith needs reason to ensure belief remains enlightened, understandable, and grounded. Philosophy must recover its "sapiential dimension" (its ability to seek wisdom and ultimate meaning) rather than just focusing on technical data or utilitarian goals. Human reason can deduce profound truths about existence—including the certainty of a Creator—by reflecting on the created world.

He viewed metaphysics as essential for grounding human reason, dignity, and faith, famously defending a "philosophy of genuinely metaphysical range". Abandoning metaphysics, he argued, led to the fragmentation of knowledge, moral relativism, and the loss of a transcendent purpose.

He believed that studying the concrete human person is the best gateway into deep metaphysical inquiry about being and existence. He combined the classical philosophy of Thomas Aquinas with phenomenology] (the study of lived human experience) to explore freedom, interiority, and self-governance.

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Neo Aristotelianism

Neo-Aristotelianism is a modern revival or adaptation of the philosophy of the ancient Greek philosopher Aristotle, using Aristotle's core concepts to address modern questions.

The movement focuses heavily on teleology (the idea that things exist to fulfil a specific purpose or "telos") and practical wisdom. It operates differently depending on the field of study:

1. Neo-Aristotelian Virtue Ethics

In moral philosophy, this framework is a major alternative to modern theories like utilitarianism or deontology (rules-based ethics). Right actions are those that a virtuous person would naturally do.

.- Flourishing (*Eudaimonia*) is the ultimate human goal, which is achieved by cultivating virtues (like courage, justice, and temperance) throughout life.

.- Practical Wisdom (*Phronesis*) dictates that rather than following rigid rules, individuals rely on good judgment to navigate complex, real-life moral dilemmas.

.2. Political & Social Philosophy

Modern political thinkers use Aristotelian ideas to critique purely individualistic societies.

.- Human Nature: It assumes humans are inherently political and social animals.

.- The Common Good: Politics and community structures exist to help citizens live the "good life" rather than just protecting individual rights or maximising wealth

.3 Discover God

Through philosophical and analytical reasoning , the mind can deduce the necessity of a divine entity:

.- **The Cosmological Argument**: Abstracting from cause and effect, the mind deduces that because the universe exists, there must be a primary, uncaused "First Cause".

.- **The Teleological Argument:** The mind observes intricate order and natural laws, leading to the abstract deduction of an intelligent Designer.

.- **The Ontological Argument:** Philosophers use pure logic to define God as the "greatest possible being," arguing that such a being must exist in reality as well as in the mind.

Atheist (secular) and Deist forms of Neo-Aristotelianism exist. While Aristotle himself believed in a "Prime Mover" and medieval Aristotelianism (Thomism) integrated his views into Christian theology, 20th and 21st-century philosophy successfully decoupled Aristotelian principles from orthodox theism. Today, thinkers apply his metaphysics and ethics across both non-theistic and minimally-theistic frameworks.

. A Atheist (Secular) Neo-Aristotelianism

Atheist variations of Neo-Aristotelianism completely strip away the divine. They are highly prominent in contemporary moral philosophy, particularly under **Neo-Aristotelian Virtue Ethics**:

.- **Ethical Naturalism:** Prominent secular philosophers argue that human "goodness" and virtues can be evaluated just like biological traits. A "good" human is simply one who functions well and achieves eudaimonia (flourishing) based on human biology and social needs. No God is required to dictate what is right.

. - **Biological Teleology:** While Aristotle viewed nature as having an overall cosmic purpose, atheist Neo-Aristotelians internalize this teleology (purpose). They view purpose as purely biological and evolutionary (eg, an acorn's "purpose" is to become an oak tree; a human's "purpose" is to think rationally and cooperate socially).

. - **Metaphysical Realism:** Some contemporary philosophers of science utilise Aristotelian hylomorphism (matter and form) and powers-based ontologies to explain the laws of physics and chemistry without invoking a divine creator.

. B Deist Neo-Aristotelianism

Deist Neo-Aristotelianism aligns closely with Aristotle's actual original view of the cosmos. In this view, God is a first cause but does not interact with humanity or perform miracles.

. - **Aristotle's Original "God":** Aristotle's Unmoved Mover (Primum Movens) is not the personal God of Abrahamic religions. It is an eternal, impersonal entity that sets the universe into motion merely by being the ultimate object of desire and pure thought. It does not know humans exist, answer prayers, or intervene in nature. This is inherently a **deistic framework**

. -**Modern Aristotelian Deism:** A notable modern example of this transition is the famous 20th-century analytical atheist philosopher Anthony Flew. Late in life, Flew abandoned atheism and embraced a belief in a creator based on the complexity of DNA and the fine-tuning of the universe. He explicitly stated that his new belief was a form of **Aristotelian Deism** — a belief in a distant, non-interventionist, supreme intelligence rather than a religious deity.

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Chapter Eleven

Where We Are

One outstanding fact emerges. While Man is clearly the terminal species (or output) of our long physical evolution, he is himself at an intermediate stage in his own development. It may be presumed that man is the (intended) culmination of evolution, and that Man's destiny is the terminal objective of evolution.

While in earlier stages, progression took place by the species, with Man evolution assigned each individual with intelligence and free will. This has made destiny primarily an individual thing, with each person free to achieve a different destiny, while the fate of the species has become dependent on the aggregate decisions of the collective.

Man soon realised that as, an evolutionary compulsion, his progress is related to his societal development as a community, a society and a global people, while safeguarding the planet and all things living thereon. Central to this is the establishment of moral values in personal decisions and moral principles in societal management. This means his destiny must be related somehow to how he performs overall.

But man is left on earth morally imperfect. Evolution has left Man in the unhappy condition of not having quite shed his earliest primal self-serving instincts, of survival and self-gratification. Even where the "right thing" is obvious, he does not always choose it. Man's universe must accordingly include a justice system, a penal and a reward system. As it stands, Man is currently still exposed to extinction by possible deviant decisions. Any two politicians could start it.

Yet another shortcoming imposed by evolution on Man is senescence or death. Technically a process inherent in the original evolutionary package, death or at least a short life-span is obsolete and incompatible today in a human being possessed of a mind (some call it a soul) whose high-end thoughts and works are increasingly non-corporeal, out-spanning time and space and reflecting a nature reaching out beyond mortality. With the endowment of such faculties, it is plausible that evolution could be taking Man beyond death to immortality, either terrestrially (including space) or Beyond Materiality. But even so, the universe is temporal. So, if evolution is indeed heading for immortality, it is as likely to be Beyond Materiality, and that is where we are meant to find our destiny.

There are other incongruities in a short life-span. A justice system cannot operate fully in a short life-span. Some rewards and punishments need an after-life. I need not mention that if we do not upgrade to immortality, Man could in the long run to be expunged from existence by the hordes of inextinguishable viral half-life multiplying in our environment.

Man has still to attain the full set of checks and balances necessary to function in equilibrium on this planet. The crux is moral performance.

In Man's complete development, mention must be made of the virtues. These are a set of values not inherent or very minimally present in Man's early motivational make-up. In a mature philosophy of life, they become, above social or legal requirements, the dominant basis of personal motivation and behaviour. These are thought to be beyond the realms of the social or penal system to cultivate. The religions teach them as flowing from or extensions of an omni virtuous godhead. Any future restructuring of human society that fails to cater for the virtues will corrode.

The crucial need is to find the Purpose of Man. So far, neither the empirical sciences or metaphysics have provided answers. It is clear we have to evolve further. So far, Man has fallen back on his first backup faculty, namely awareness of the unknown (including arcane faculties some have). Through it, religion has created what looks like a remarkably consistent (f varied) framework of understanding,

integrating the existence of a Supreme Being and the Purpose of Man. Man has fallen back on his second backup faculty, belief.

The statistics show that a majority of peoples believe and retain a religious framework to this life. It would be true to say that the religions have been a major factor providing stabilisation enabling Man to progress so far. Like everything else, the religions have been subject to abuse, but here we looking at their positive contributions. I feel it is meaningful to see awareness of the unknown, religion and belief as implanted evolutionary attributes designed to help Man through the pre-intellectualised stages of Man's understandings of his destiny.

We seem to. have passed the stage when it was thought that as science cleared up the unknown, religion would fade away. This has not happened. Communism has gone the other way and banned religion as the opium of the people, but results so far have not addressed the core issues. Pending major break-throughs, it seems the religions have a continuing role to play.- with some improvements towards their common approaches and public digestibility.

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Breakthroughs

Man's most powerful mental skills relate to his command of the empirical world, so much as that Man today has virtually mastered the physical universe. And he is breaking down the frontiers with accelerating speed. In this study, we have perceived that Man has passed through four stages of evolution since emergence:

. (1) Turning Point One: **Emergence**. From 50,000 CE

Emergence of Homo Sapiens. Hunter and Gatherers, to Nomads, Settlements (agri)

. (2) Turning Point Two: **Civilisation**. From 12,000 CE

Urban communities, states, kingdoms, ancient civilisations and empires

. (3) Turning Point Three: **Towards a Global Society**. From 1500 CE

Discovery of the Solar System and Planets, the Renaissance, the Scientific Revolution, Colonisation of the Earth, World Wars and Revolutions, the United Nations and the Declaration of Universal Human Rights

. (4) Turning Point Four: **Towards Technological Society** From 1900 CE

The Quantum-Relativity revolution, the Digital Age. from 1950,.the Quantum Age from 1980s, the quantum computer and Artificial intelligence

We are closing in on this next stage.

. (5) Turning Point Five. **The Technological Man**,

Living in a Man-created environment, biologically modified, perhaps reproducing by design if not through cloning; and with longevity and perfect health of mind and body, probably in space.

The Information Age, in which Man lives by information, continually replenished and accessed, driving the systems around him and providing him his inputs for his personal decisions, and the Automated Age, in which work is mostly automated or robotised and leisure the primary life-satisfaction.

A Knowledge Society

Man lives substantially in the mental plane, which in turn feeds on information and increasingly stores knowledge.

With our quantum level capabilities, we will see further, our stored knowledge will accumulate and our perspectives of the unknown will be greatly extended. We shall become increasingly a **Knowledge Society, and a Knowledge civilisation..**

This would be the ultimate peg of the ascent of Man and evolution's terminal objective of having upgraded Man with intelligence and free will.

It still remains open what roles religions will play. If there is a godhead, religions can be expected to service Man's relationship with him..

Where ignorance originally pushed us to the unknown, knowledge will focus our pathway in future. How far our biological limits of closure will allow us to go into the metaphysical unknown, ie. how far we can push this limit, is the big question, but we shall be working on it separately.

As a Knowledge Society, destiny will remain what each individual chooses his to be. Man's existence will continue to be driven by requiring knowledge of the origin and purpose of things. Hopefully he will be better informed.

At present, the science community is working from the baseline of the Stephen Hawking hypothesis that the cosmos, evolution and Man **could** have emerged from nothing, without external intervention. The fundamental issue is whether the whole caboodle happened by concatenated blind chance or represents a mega-design. The metaphysical faculties argue for a Supreme Being being responsible.

My perspective is that the more Man uncovers, the more he will want to know who put it all together and why. This is innate to the faculty of intelligence as evolved in Man. The answers, extraordinarily, lie outside both science and metaphysics.

It is the paradox of evolution: to produce intelligent Man to search for knowledge beyond the physical, and to contemplate "nothing" as a starting point.

It is the further extraordinary feature of evolution to incorporate in Man the adjunct faculty to believe what he cannot prove, and to place his destiny in the realm of belief.

Belief will be refined by knowledge. Man uses this facility in everyday life. With knowledge and belief, man is perched closed to fulfilment.

Outstanding Issues

Before we get there, there are several outstanding issues to be addressed:

- 1. There are vast gaps in our understanding of the universe. We know little of dark matter and nothing of dark energy, which constitute 25% and 68% respectively of the universe.
- 2 We calculate the universe is hurtling away at the boundaries faster than light, and I am not aware that anyone has tied this up with space-time.
- 3 Unless we can travel faster than light, we will be getting nowhere in space. It is time to re-invent quantum mechanics to break the time-barrier.
- 4 We know little about gravity
- 5 On the biological side, we are seriously threatened to extinction by our inextinguishable virus co-earthlings.
- 6 Our short-life-spans and the imperfectability of the human are problems we should not take with us into the next stage.

Break-through: Technological frontier

Currently, we have three powerful tools, namely the quantum computer, artificial intelligence (AI), and super-electron microscopes (EMS). These represent the tools available to enable us to break through to the next levels. We need to stabilise and standardise the first two.

Secondly, we must re-write our scientific fundamentals to clear up the outstanding issues. We really need to know more about our universe, and above all to travel faster than light.

Thirdly, we have to address the biological issues. We need mastery of gene control. Only then can we talk of "designer men", in perfect health, with longevity and possibly defeating senescence.

One should hope that the biological improvements can and will improve Man's behaviour, in particular his moral performance. If and when there is no more moral evil, Man can focus on the virtues as the

basis of life's satisfactions and merits for eternal life. The trick will be excising his baser habits without affecting his free will: that must remain paramount.

The twenty-first-century neurosciences have shifted to understanding how neural circuits dynamically compute, adapt, and generate behaviour in real-time. These disciplines are due to open new vistas of understanding how the human mind works, including extra-rational perceptions. We could be due for an evolutionary quantum jump in the last direction

It would be a breakthrough if we could isolate the **gene** that triggered this latter faculty, in fact any gene that could double our metaphysical range. We could then apply it in gene therapy, and our descendants could add it to the options on the menu for self-design.

Break-through: Metaphysical frontier

Notwithstanding evolutionary advances in perception, we may still have our metaphysical issues. There are two other frontiers of metaphysical development.

. (a) We are still in physical evolutionary mode. There. Is nothing to say our minds will not continue to develop. There is nothing to say evolution will not decide that we are ready to perceive more into the unknown with our new tools and vantage points. What we speculate now and believe might become common sense.

. (b) The second is that biological designer techniques might also be applied to tweak our minds, so we can think further and faster. These might help Man to sharpen his awareness of the unknown. Quantum computing and AI should enable him to see further over the horizon.. The Supreme Being and the Purpose of Man might then be more deductible or reasonable.

if the preceding do not answer all the Metaphysical issues, it will be a sorry state for a Man to live for a thousand years, knowing everything else, with a perfect score of a- hole-in-one every time on the golf course, and still wondering who created the universe and what his own purpose in life is; or worse if he finds no purpose at all.

Break-through: Religious frontier

Historically, the religions separately claimed to offer the correct way, to the point of belligerence. The civilised view today, however, is more like, provided a Man believes and acts in good faith (and keeps a good moral score), there is an even chance of his achieving an eternal destiny, by the religion he chooses. This conclusion should be considered a **landmark** evolutionary achievement in itself, comparable to the earlier landmark of globalisation, and became achievable in an even earlier landmark when Man separated religion from politics and further enshrined freedom of religion as a fundamental human right.

Religions still have some work to do In Man's moral management. As we grow ultra-technological, the moral development of man grows increasingly complex. With the increasing layers of the dark web and the need for ethics to avoid misinformation and fraud, not to mention mass destruction through biological and drone warfare, the moral behaviour of Man is "Achilles heel". So far, there is no indication that the scientific disciplines have clear-cut ideas how to solve this problem. We have only the teachings of the religions. Man remains imperfect.

As we progress as an Information Society, we shall share all information alike, via commonly accessible resources, search engines and AI tools. The religions are inevitably in the mix. The world is more and more capable of thinking alike in the religious domain, while earlier misconceptions are disappearing.

Before modern times, man has pursued the Metaphysical issues in a number of separate civilisations. The advantage has been that it has allowed for us to see the emergence within a homogeneous heritage of the conception of a godhead or supreme being, and its impact on the societal and moral development of an individual civilisation.

Today, we can look at the questions with the experiences of several civilisations together, aided by our new tools of information. Whatever the information package, the mere fact that it will represent information previously unavailable (and now commonly agreed) means that we shall be better placed to ask better questions. It does not mean we will be able to answer ourselves. There will still be gaps, albeit more focussed one. Man will ultimately have to believe something, even that there is nothing to believe.

It can be expected that people in future will choose their beliefs and way of life with better aforethought, rather than by family tradition or ethnic background. One can expect the major religions to go international, as Christianity and Islam already are. It can also be expected the religions will increasingly participate in common research with the secular professionals, including coverage of relatively under-explored areas like the arcane skills, mysticism, etc.

It is too early to say religion will fade out as an option. The Information Society should give us a win-win situation. The reasons for belief in religion, in fact in anything, will become clearer.

Break-through; The Societal Format

Presently, societal development is proceeding in two political formats, the democratic system, and the communist planned society. In a future world, Man must remain free to choose his destiny - and as long as it is necessary his religion.

The authoritarian system of communism has so far not proved successful, neither for the above reasons, nor politically nor economically. The Chinese modifications are the most promising developments. It is likely we shall coalesce and emerge as a single global society with a common bill of human rights and sharing an increasingly common technology-based culture, including freedom of religion.

Break-through: Scientific Frontier

Finally, as science revises its understandings of the physical world, we shall be watching closely for their fresh insights into the origin of things. The prevailing Big Bang theory states that the universe began as an extremely hot, dense point (singularity) that rapidly expanded and cooled. However, the exact mechanisms and "pre-Big Bang" moments remain open to active research. Representative of the present state of the art, Stephen Hawking concluded that the universe was not created by a divine being but instead formed spontaneously out of "nothing" due to the fundamental laws of physics, particularly gravity. He explained that space and time are finite but unbounded, meaning the universe has no definitive starting point. He clarified that he did not mean this proved that there was no Supreme Being, only that He was not necessary to kick-start the universe.

Recent information via the JWT suggests the Big Bang might not have happened at all. So, we are in for exciting times. Let us be clear about one thing. It is outside the province of the enquiring methodology of science to prove the existence or otherwise of a Supreme Being: it is the wrong set of mental tools for this purpose. But, it is within Man's metaphysical ability (ie. the right set of tools) that, if he looks at the same world scientists do, he can validly ask the (common sense) question: who designed and who made all this, and what for. The empirical establishes the basis for the metaphysical.

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Chapter Twelve

Evolutionary Pathways

Evolutionary Strategy

From this study, I find that there is a unifying direction and purpose combining the pre-biotic and the biotic stages of our evolution. Evolution, in its result, has been a single programme in two parts which brought about the existence of Man as we have him.

The overwhelming evidence is that man is the culmination of physical evolution. All parallel proto-types have been phased out. The infusion of intelligence marked a quantum leap and a turning point.

It is equally clear that the next stage of evolution has been placed in the hands of Man, through civilisation.

It is also preponderantly clear that Man has been endowed with free will, and that his destiny is therefore individual, in the final analysis to be chosen by him.

Evolution must offer at least a Two-Pathway destiny option for the individual, while providing for a collective destiny for the species.

Man has attained hegemony over the planet Earth. and his societal development adopting a democratic political system is properly orientated towards these ends.

Our immediate objectives are three-fold: (1) well-being of the individual, (2) welfare of our society, and (3) perpetuation of our species. We could add two others: namely (4) live longer and (5) preserve the planet. The ultimate terminal objective of evolution is apparently something for Man to decide, set course for and achieve. If it is argued that evolution has been blind, it would appear to be no longer so.

There is in fact a sense that in relation to our capabilities, our immediate objectives are incomplete. There is a sense that our temporal existence is not a perfect paradise.

Historically, Man's instincts have prompted him that there could be somewhere beyond a higher plane, a more perfect existence, non-corporeal, possibly in an afterlife where mortality would have no meaning.

Therefore, Man leans towards these promptings to ask the metaphysical questions, and seek a more perfect life in the hereafter. There is more than a suspicion that the idea must have emerged within us as part of our evolution, or we would not have conceived of it and be looking around for it.

The study perceives Man's abilities to ask the metaphysical questions as significant of an orientation within evolution for him to reach out beyond materiality. This latter is supported by the implanted awareness of the unknown in him and his arcane faculties, the foundations of man's religious development.

If this is indeed man's passage of knowledge to the unknown, then evolution requires that, having established the metaphysical reasonableness thereof, man must **believe** in the metaphysical answers by the routes available to him. Belief becomes fulcrum to evolution's own terminal objective of gaining immortality through man. Belief is functional to evolution's purposes.

Removed from its religious connotations, belief⁴⁹ is a natural component of human perception, recognition and acceptance of reality, including abstract reality such as shapes, forms, values and ideas. Humans organise their lives based on their beliefs. When belief leads to conviction, a person acts on it. Before that, belief is an open door to acceptance or rejection.

One would have thought that belief was the vital step, and all should be plain sailing after that. In fact, man's overall understanding is that he is also required to successfully manage his passions in a moral life **to qualify** for the aspired afterlife,. These passions he inherited as part of his evolution; and it seems their control has become a second qualification, and the decisive one, for immortality. In effect, evolution has put man in a "double spin" - metaphysics is not enough.

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Pathway (1) - Two Stream Evolution (Democratic system)

We may prognosticate that mankind will continue evolving as a series of generations in a free will environment, who live to a ripe old age (say 500 years each) - in an increasingly technological and knowledge-based world, here and in space. His destiny options should (would) still the same, .and left open-ended, for individual discovery and choice. We may assume he will make better choices.

In this scenario, evolution will (must) continue to offer the Two-Option proposition: (a) For Believers, harvest to eternity those who can figure it out and merit it by a good life; and (b) For Non-Believers, let them terminate with their mortality, satisfied or otherwise with what they have made of their lives.

Given the above scenario, we could express evolution's strategies to achieve its current objectives as follows:

. (1) That individual man continues to self-evolve as a technological creature, living progressively longer from generation to the next, perpetuating Homo sapiens as such, on Earth and in space. If he finds no other path, each man dies (goes extinct) satisfied with what he has done. To the extent a Man has done good in his life, his contribution will become part of the species' societal development and the knowledge pool if he has contributed to it. In this scenario, the species carries on, but each person is an intermediate. The species ends when the last man dies, and evolution ends.

.(2) That if man collectively answers the metaphysical issues in the positive, particularly that there is an accountable afterlife, then more (if not all) individuals will orientate their values and lives accordingly, with significant changes in societal arrangements. The ideal is everyone transfers to immortality. Man begins an immortal stream, and so does the species. In the short-term, this is unlikely; perhaps it could become more so as man grows older and "wiser", perhaps in space, in a thousand years.

.(3) And there is the status quo: that the majority of the peoples of the Earth believe in various answers to the metaphysical issues, predominantly the existence of a Supreme Being and an afterlife. As a great evolutionary achievement of its own, mankind has secularised societal development, allowing for individual freedom of belief. In this scenario man is en route to an immortal terminal objective if he chooses to go for the afterlife, and an intermediate otherwise. The species survives on both planes, while man continues the quest in temporal time.

.(4) Whether he can re-engineer his biology to remove senescence will be of paramount importance. At that point, whether or not he has resolved the metaphysical issues, he will also be looking at temporal immortality. It could be a very boring eternity if by then he had not figured why he existed, who made him or how it all came to be. It is too far-fetched to consider what his options would be if he decided at some stage along the years that there was a Supreme Being, etc. We could suppose that he still could re-organise his life, and when ready (paid up for his past sins) and become qualified,

⁴⁹ - In cognitive science and neuroscience, a belief is defined as a mental representation or subjective attitude that a proposition about the world is true. It acts as a template or predictive model that the brain uses to navigate the environment, categorise information, and guide behaviour.

self-terminate and transiter to celestial immortality. Until then, non-believers have a long wait, and will remain with his mortal options.

The only unresolved point then is that the “bad guys” on Earth may think that they will “get away” with their misdeeds if they simply do not (ever) believe in a Supreme Being. We have the cases of megalomaniacs who have killed millions of people and remained unrepentant at death. According to the Abrahamic religions, they get cast into hell for all eternity. Given the state of imperfectability of Man, quite a percentage of humans might end up there. No doubt suitable arrangements could set up for punishment in immortal terrestrial conditions.

Re-incarnation

Evolution may, however, have other plans for non-believers and those believers who do not qualify for eternal bliss: re-incarnation as conceptualised in the Dharmatic religions would be one. This is a merciful arrangement. The individual who failed to make it the first time round has the chance to work his way up, perhaps with more than one re-incarnation, to achieve his release, instead of being condemned eternally in hell. In this event, most humans will probably make it to eternal bliss which will represent a more respectable performance rate for evolution overall. The two systems could be co-operational even now, we would not know. There is no telling how things will work out once we increase our longevity or reduce our imperfectabilities by biological tweaking, or move into space.

So far, we have only two perceived options in further human evolution: (1) life here and now only, in temporal time, mortal, and (2) life after death, in association with the Supreme Being, immortal. We might note that , until he actually dies, man has a choice which way to go.

It almost seems like evolution is hedging its bets. If immortality is the objective, evolution is prepared to take those who make it.

Perhaps we are still in an intermediate stage, and current man is still a developing prototype, to see how far this model will work. If Man fails, there is the alternative formula, without free will.

In the current two stream scenario, all non-believers will go extinct - assuming they have used up their re-incarnation eligibilities. The believers shall enjoy immortal life after death according to their merits, but may be punished or re-incarnated if their evil doings outweigh their good works and they remain unrepentant. A wise-guy has pointed out that a really unrepentant “bad” person should be very careful not to entertain any belief in the possibility of a just higher being before he dies, or he could unwittingly qualify for eternal damnation. The religions generally offer mercy as well as justice, and he might make a better deal enrolling in their fold before passing on.

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Pathway (2) – Classless Society (Communist system)

Communism is the alternative socio-economic system which has been tried by mankind to correct the income and power imbalances of capitalism which underpins the democratic system. The defining concept is total central planning of society and the economy, in effect replacing free will as well as the free market. The terminal objective (ie. destiny of mankind) is seen as a classless society, in which each person contributes what he can and receives what he needs.

The ideology rejects God and religion as features supportive of oppressive capitalism, and is aggressively atheistic. It sees “dialectic materialism” as the driving principle of evolution, and political revolution as the instrument of its fulfilment. Religion is regarded as the “opium of the people”. Communist states are basically one-party political systems

Communism began with the October 1917 Revolution in Russia. This earlier revolution, under the USSR, has failed. The latter has reverted to 15 independent states, mostly still adopting authoritarian forms of government, but all operating alongside and or within the free market world economy – as do all current Communist countries.

Communist China came into existence on 1 October 1949. With a population of 1.4 billion, it is by far the largest of the five current Communist countries, the others being, North Korea, Cuba, Vietnam and Laos. China leads the communist world ideologically with its Marxist-Leninist Communism “with Chinese characteristics.” Increasingly, she offers the world a “socialist market economy” as a viable common system.

All the current five Communist countries have endorsed the principles of the UN bill of human rights, and all have signed the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights (ICCPR) of 1986, but China and Cuba have not ratified the latter yet. In practice, freedom of political choice, speech and religion is generally restricted in all communist countries.

A somewhat disgruntled Communist revolutionary, when told about the marvels of evolution, wondered what the fuss was all about if Man’s final destiny was as a digit in the totalitarian classless society. We started that way as apes. Even the ants got there as a species and never got further.

Communist ideology only provides the evolutionary destiny of a classless society. So far, this has not happened, The Chinese Communist moves to promote a socialist market economy suggests we shall coalesce into a single system. It is likely the Two-Pathways options may open up, with increasing persona freedom, certainly the second set of “non-theistic” options under the democratic system.

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Chapter Fourteen

Closing Remarks

It seems contrary to “common sense” that, after establishing Man with free will and abstract thought, and with technology to master the universe, it does not matter (to evolution) whether man pushes himself further or destroys the Earth and himself. The very same abstract thinking tells us that man’s purpose is to take evolution forward, whether to the stars, beyond time-space, and even to discover the unknown, even Beyond Materiality. Man is a sublime creature in transition, if presently with shortcomings, in search of his destiny. To write him off after a short terminal life would represent a colossal evolutionary failure.

We shall progressively acquire enhanced, perhaps additional, intellectual faculties and multiply our technical capabilities. We should in time move into space. We should have a clearer picture of things by then. As I see it, we have awesome information technology to deploy. And the already well-laid metaphysical platforms look like the best common ground for solid forward footholds.

Evolution has already moved Man through four Turning Points since emergence, and is working toward him becoming an information-based Technological Man in a Technological Environment heading to become what I call a Knowledge Society.

Man lives substantially in the mental plane, which in turn feeds on information and increasingly stores knowledge. We shall progressively acquire enhanced processing capacity.

As a Knowledge Society, Man’s existence will be increasingly driven by requiring knowledge of causes and objectives, the origin of things, and responsible parties (as against just descriptive and functional data) and the need to understand what is going on in the whole universe, not just the physical sciences of it. The metaphysical faculties will take the lead. Man will desire to know and make contact with the Prime Mover or Supreme Being and learn the Purpose of Man directly – or whatever alternative being or non-being responsible for the same. . Belief will be refined by knowledge. In the discovery of a Supreme Being, he will be increasingly resonant to its divine virtues and disposed to live permanently in the eternal court of the source of all goodness.

The Man developed to the level of the Knowledge Society will be better able to pick his evolutionary pathways and avoid the pitfalls of damnation. The arrangements for his progression from mortal to immortal will itself evolve in time, to suit the stage of Man’s development. This would be the ultimate peg of the ascent of Man and evolution’s terminal objective of having upgraded Man with intelligence and free will. It still remains open what roles religions will play. If they find a godhead, religions can be expected to service the relationship until death.

We need new thinking, new vision, and like the eukaryotes of old, new synthesis and new courage. Somewhere in the Late Jurassic, there were dinosaurs (archosauria) . When one of them was told his descendants would one day fly, he said :”That would be a quantum leap”. We are in the same position.

My final observation: compared to the elegance and precision of the other works of supposedly blind evolution, Man’s destiny is a purposeless mess, unless there is a terminal objective. and we are meant to find out. Again, before we do, everybody beforethat will have been discards, another mess.

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END

About Gerald F Pillay

(Extracted from Academia, at <https://geraldpillay.academia.edu/>)

Biography

Gerald Francis Pillay was born in Melaka on 2 Dec 1934. The family migrated to Singapore in 1949. He graduated with the B.A. Honours Upper II in Geography (1957) from the University of Malaya (then in Singapore).

Mr. Pillay served 33 years in the Singapore public service. In 1957, he joined the Administrative Service, rising to Deputy Secretary. In 1974 he was transferred to the newly-created Industrial Training Board as Secretary. In 1989, he retired as Deputy Director (Dy CEO) from the board, which has since become the Institute of Technical Education (ITE).

In 1989, he formed GFP Consultancy. He practised as a policy consultant in Technical Education (TVET)), serving international agencies such as the World Bank, UNESCO and ILO, employers and employers' organisations. In 1992-3, Mr. Pillay served on Botswana's Presidential National Commission on Education, nominated by the Singapore Government. He retired from practice in 200the

HIS RECENT RESEARCH INTERESTS have been in the major frontiers of science and technology, probing the origin of things. He hopes next to explore the material-spiritual duality of human nature.

He releases these technical self-briefs on [Academia.com](https://geraldpillay.academia.edu/), so far on "Quantum Mechanics" (2021), "Virus -The Biological Predator" (2022), and the "Cosmos - An Historical Survey and Exploration of the Future" (2023).

He has also e-published "the Chitty Melaka Story" (second edition) (2013) and "Japanese Conquest of Malaya and Singapore, 1941-2" (2019).(check Google).

Full CV available at "About Me" ,at the WordPress publications site.at <https://geraldpillay.wordpress.com>

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