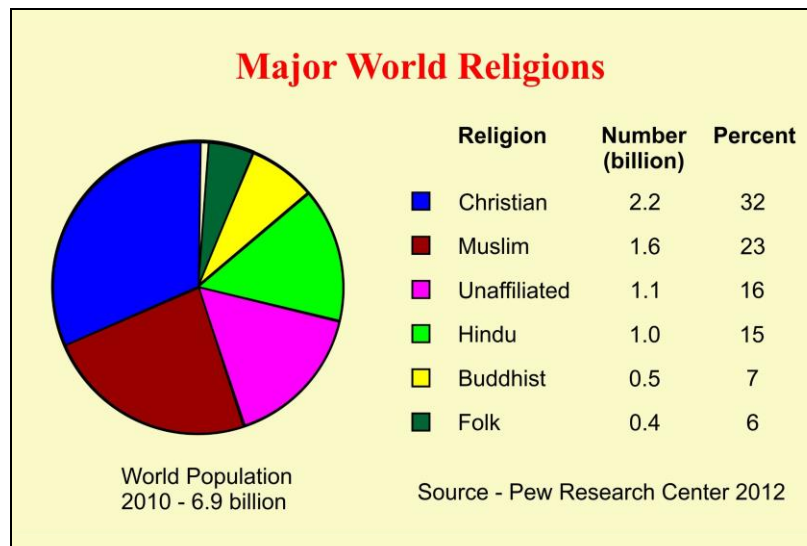


Vishnu is the Hindu god who maintains or preserves the world. He is often considered the main god of the Hindu trinity, made up of Vishnu, Brahma the creator and Shiva the destroyer. Vishnu has many avatars. As we discussed last week, he appears when necessary to right the course of history. In the *Bhagavad Gita* (song of God), he appeared as Krishna to instruct and encourage Prince Arjuna before the great climactic battle of the Kurukshetra War.

Vishnu has four arms. Each hand holds one of his attributes: a mace which represents his authority, a chakram or war-disk, a conch shell which symbolizes the spiraling interactions of the world, and a rosary to count off the passage of time. The war disk is used when it becomes necessary to restore the *dharma* in a universe that has succumbed to evil. In the statue the central figure keeps everything in order. Brahma and Shiva are at his side, and he is surrounded by his own avatars. The statue shows how Vishnu keeps everything in its proper place.

This session deals with the roles played by religion and by science in human society. What authority is wielded and how does this authority change what happens socially and politically.

The first thing we shall consider is the fragmentation of religion. The voice of God is not the same in different countries, and this has caused much political strife. Religion may not be the primary cause for such disputes. Unscrupulous leaders often use religion to support their drive to power. Nevertheless, many important political differences in the world have a religious aspect.



Ways to remember the religions – 1 in 3 are Christian, 1 in 4 are Muslim, 1 in 6 are Hindu.

About half of Christians (1 billion) are Catholic; just over a third (800 million) are Protestant; just over 10% (250 million) are Orthodox. The rest include the Mormons (15 million) and Jehovah's Witnesses (8 million). Though these believe in Christ, many would not consider their beliefs as truly Christian.

Within Islam, about 85% are Sunni and 10% are Shia. Various other denominations (Sufis, Alawites) sometimes distinguish themselves from the main traditions.

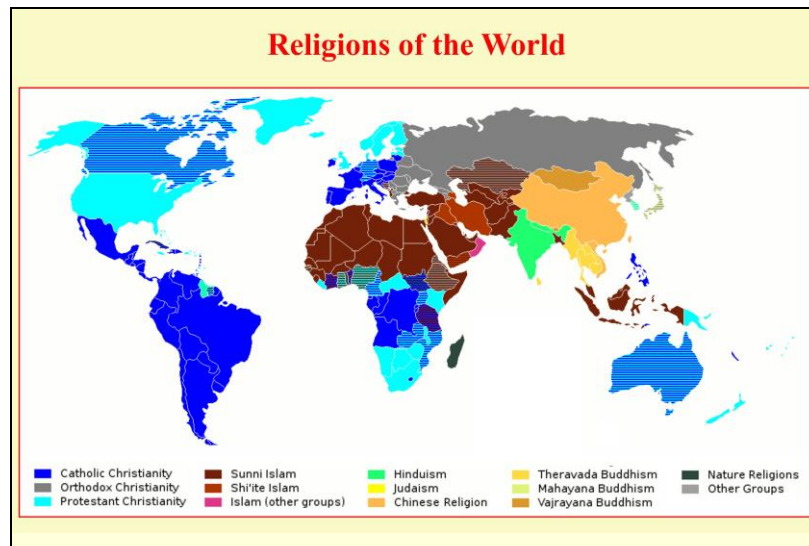
Hinduism does not have much central doctrinal authority. Adherents may concentrate on Vishnu (Krishna), Shiva or Shakti as their preferred deity.

Buddhism has three major divisions. Over one half follow Mahayana ("great vehicle") Buddhism. These adherents are mainly in China, Vietnam, Korea and Japan. Just over one third are Theravada ("school of the elders"). This is mainly in Sri Lanka and South-East Asia. The rest are mainly of the Vajrayana ("diamond vehicle") school, mainly in Tibet Mongolia and Western China.

Of the smaller religions:

Sikhism 25 m
 Judaism 10 m
 Taoism 8 m
 Baha'i 5 m
 Jainism 4 m
 Shinto 3 m

Some religions have far greater recognition than their numbers warrant. The number of active scientologists is about 100,000.




This map shows the geographic distribution of the world's religions. Only the major religions are shown in each country. The map shows the subdivisions of the major religions. Of note are the “pockets” – Catholicism in the Philippines, Protestant Christianity and Buddhism in South Korea. “Chinese religions” are a mixture of Confucianism, Taoism and Buddhism, although the People's Republic of China is officially atheist. Mahayana Buddhism is not prominently displayed on the map – it is represented in Japan and Korea. However, it is widespread (but not a majority-religion) in China.

The conflicts in the Middle East and between India and Pakistan are underwritten by religious differences. Nevertheless, the great dictators of the 20th Century – Hitler, Stalin, Mao – were atheists.

The fact that there are so many different religions with such completely different beliefs suggests that they are all wrong. If each religion insists that it is right and all the others are wrong, any one religion is considered wrong by a majority of earthly believers. One way out of this logic is that each religion sees transcendent truths in its own way. The full understanding of these truths is beyond the ability of any one religion but possible if one amalgamates all the different views. This is the idea of religious pluralism, to which we shall return later in this session.

Heresy and Schism

- ~400 BCE Buddhism separates from Hinduism
- ~33 CE Christianity separates from Judaism
- 632 CE Shia Islam separates from Sunni Islam
- 1054 CE Great Schism between Eastern Churches and Rome
- ~1500 CE Sikhism develops in Northern India
- 1517 CE Beginning of the Protestant Reformation



Sant' Apollinare Nuovo, Ravenna

Shia Islam claims that the successor of the Prophet Muhammad was his son-in-law Ali ibn Abi Talib, and not to Abu Bakr, an early convert to Islam. Shia comes from *Shī'atu 'Alī*, “adherents of Ali” This division occurred only 10 years after Islam began.

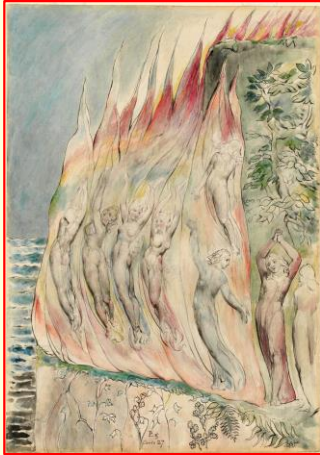
Sikhism shares many of the beliefs of Hinduism but stresses its monotheism. It began with Guru Nanak (1469-1539).

Christianity has been perhaps the most violent of religions in its actions against heresy. Numerous are the heresies persecuted by the Christian Church. Marcionism (beginning in the 2nd Century CE) proposed that the God of the New Testament was not the same as Yahweh of the Old Testament. Arianism (beginning in the 3rd Century CE) proposed that Christ was created by God, and not an equal part of the orthodox Trinity. Pelagianism (beginning in the 4th Century CE) claimed that human beings were not inherently stained by the original sin of Adam and Eve, and that they could attain salvation by being good rather than by being saved by the grace of God.

The illustration shows the fate of one of the Christian heresies. Theodoric the Great, King of the Ostrogoths, built the great church now called the Basilica of Sant' Apollinare Nuovo in Ravenna in 504 CE. Theodoric was a Arian. The beautiful mosaics showing the king and his court were replaced after Theodoric's death with images of curtains, as Rome re-exerted the orthodox views of the trinity. However, the hands of the heretics remain on the columns of the altered mosaics.



The Albigensian Crusade (1209–1229) was a campaign to eliminate the Cathares from Southern France. They believed that the world was inherently imperfect. Everything is characterized by a good-evil or light-dark dualism. The goodness of man is imprisoned in a body from which it can only be freed by death. The Cathares followed the teachings of Christ but denied his divinity. They were gentle and peaceful people, calling themselves *les bons hommes* – the good people. Most of them were captured and burned at the stake. The Cathares built their castles high in the mountains. The illustration shows Peyrepertuse. This particular one withstood the crusade and was only relinquished later.



Purgatory

In the 12th Century CE, the Roman Catholic Church evolved a doctrine of Purgatory. Though sinners were saved from Hell by the grace of God, they still needed to be cleansed of sin to enter Heaven. This purification occurred in a place or state called Purgatory.

The time that a soul spends in Purgatory could be decreased by prayers for the dead or by purchasing indulgences that could be provided by the church.

The corruption involved in granting indulgences was one of the main reasons for the Reformation.

Canto 27 of Dante's *Purgatorio*
William Blake, 1827

The second great split in the Christian Church – the Reformation – largely derived from the dogma of purgatory. This was promulgated by theologians who could not bring themselves to believe that a sinner could go to heaven without also being purged of his or her sin. A problem

with salvation by faith alone is that the sinner who was saved could then continue in sin – unless there was some sort of punishment to act as a deterrent.

Purgatory is described in the *Catechism of the Catholic Church*:

1030 All who die in God's grace and friendship, but still imperfectly purified, are indeed assured of their eternal salvation; but after death they undergo purification, so as to achieve the holiness necessary to enter the joy of heaven.

1031 The Church gives the name *Purgatory* to this final purification of the elect, which is entirely different from the punishment of the damned.

Though “different” from the punishment of the damned, purgatory was still something to be feared.



The ghost of Hamlet's father provides a vivid description of a soul in purgatory. From Hamlet Act I Scene V:

I am thy father's spirit,
Doom'd for a certain term to walk the night,
And for the day confined to fast in fires,
Till the foul crimes done in my days of nature
Are burnt and purged away. But that I am forbid
To tell the secrets of my prison-house,
I could a tale unfold whose lightest word
Would harrow up thy soul, freeze thy young blood,
Make thy two eyes, like stars, start from their spheres,
Thy knotted and combined locks to part
And each particular hair to stand on end,
Like quills upon the fretful porcupine:

But this eternal blazon must not be
To ears of flesh and blood. List, list, O, list!

Many scholars believe that Shakespeare's family was Roman Catholic.

Cults

During WWII, the US used the Vanuatu islands in the South Pacific as a base for cargo planes delivering supplies to American forces. The people who manned the base provided the islanders with American food and other wonderful things. Since the Americans went away after the war many islanders have continued to remember John Frum ("John From America") and to hope for his return by wearing uniforms and building mockups of the American planes.



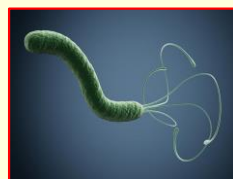
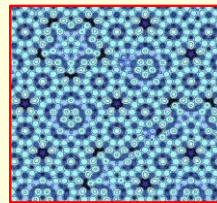
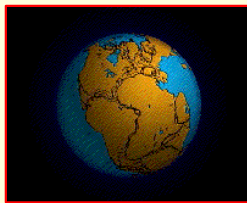
Followers of John Frum, Vanuatu

Vanuatu used to be called New Hebrides. An excellent article about the Cargo Cult in Vanuatu is by Brooke Jarvis with photographs by Max Pinckers.

<https://www.topic.com/who-is-john-frum>

The term cult was originally used for the "care" of religious sites and beliefs – the rituals and ceremonies associated with the practice of religion. In modern parlance it has become a pejorative term for small groups of people with unusual or unorthodox beliefs who gather together under a charismatic leader. The beliefs are often so bizarre as to be ridiculous. However, some cults have been murderous. Over 900 members of the Peoples Temple of Jim Jones committed suicide with cyanide in Guyana in 1978.

Heresy in Science



Often, new ideas in science are so completely contrary to accepted theory that they might be considered heretical.


Among these are illustrated:

Basic Sciences


1. Continental Drift proposed by Alfred Wegener in 1912 – this was finally accepted in the 50s and 60s when sea-floor spreading and tectonic plates were figured out.
2. The impact of a large meteor was proposed in 1980 by Luis and Walter Alvarez to explain the extinction of the dinosaurs 66 million years BP. This was not accepted until evidence was found for such an impact in the Chicxulub Crater off the coast of the Yucatan Peninsula in Mexico.
3. Quasicrystals (ordered but not periodic) were discovered in 1982 by Dan Schechtman. Linus Pauling said – “There is no such thing as quasi-crystals, only quasi-scientists.” Schechtman finally won the 2011 Nobel Prize in Chemistry

Medical Sciences






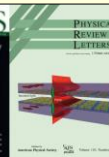

1. In 1884 Robert Koch proposed that inflammatory disease was caused by germs and not by miasma or putrefaction. He was criticized by well established pathologists such as Rudolf Virchow who thought that the bacteria in the diseased tissue were there because the tissue was already diseased. Koch was awarded the Nobel Prize in 1905.
2. In 1950 Richard Doll proposed that lung cancer was caused by smoking tobacco. This was not really accepted until the US Surgeon General’s Report in 1964.
3. In 1982 Robin Warren and Barry Marshall proposed that peptic ulcers were caused by the organism *Helicobacter pylori* and not by excess secretion of gastric acids. They ultimately won the Nobel Prize in 2005.



Problems in Science



1. Reproducibility: Journals tend not to publish replications or experiments with negative results
2. Peer Review: Peer review can be biased toward the status quo; absence of peer review promotes bad science.
3. Innovation: Journals and granting agencies do not promote creative new ideas and favor established scientists.
4. Interdisciplinary Sciences: Funding for new fields is difficult to find
5. Commercial Funding: Companies supporting research can lead to bias.

The reproducibility problems are discussed in a 2016 *Nature* editorial:

<https://www.nature.com/news/1-500-scientists-lift-the-lid-on-reproducibility-1.19970>


Peer review problems are reviewed in an article by Richard Smith (Peer review: a flawed process at the heart of science and journals. *Journal of the Royal Society of Medicine* (2006) 99:178-182):

<https://journals.sagepub.com/doi/pdf/10.1177/014107680609900414>

The covers at the bottom of the slide show some high-impact science journals that publish actual journals as well as providing electronic access. Over the past decade or so, many non-print peer-reviewed journals have been established – such as PLOS (*Public Library of Science*) and *Scientific Reports*. These provide free public access to their articles. However, there have also been many non-print journals without peer-review. Most of these are for-profit endeavors that charge a fee to publish the papers.

Commercial funding can cause conscious or unconscious bias in the results. This is especially true in clinical trials. However, entrepreneurs will support innovative research that public agencies fail to support. Sometimes, this brings new treatments. Dennis Slamon could not get funding for his new ideas about cancer treatment but was funded by the company Genetech, and ultimately developed an effective treatment for some forms of breast cancer – Herceptin. <https://arstechnica.com/science/2014/09/is-there-a-creativity-deficit-in-science/>

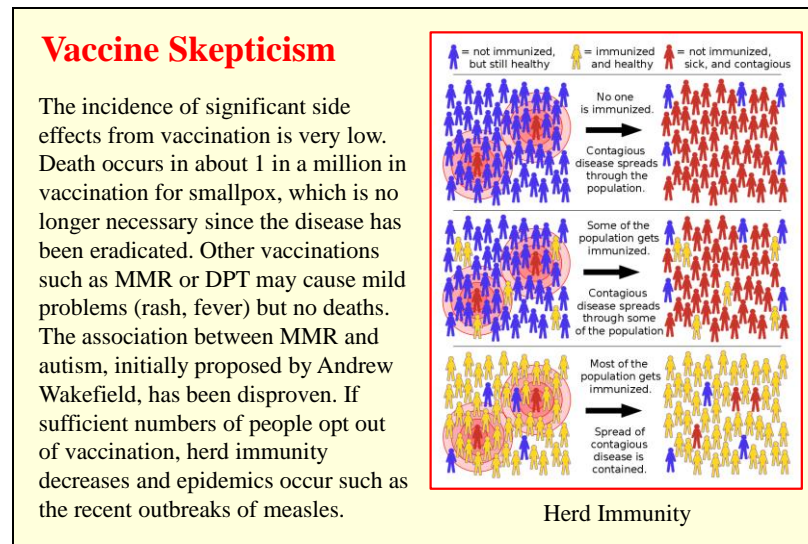
Sometimes, however, private investments can lead to real problems such as the idea of multiple blood tests from a finger-prick sample. The company *Theranos* led by Elizabeth Holmes was supported with billions of dollars. In the end the procedures did not work. This is reviewed in the 2018 book *Bad Blood* by John Carreyrou.

<p>Skepticism</p> <p>Skepticism in Religion can be overcome by faith, or by trusting in the evidence of others.</p> <p>Skepticism in Science can only be overcome by experimentally testing the predictions of the new theory.</p> <p>Those who just decide not to believe what the consensus has agreed to, e.g. holocaust deniers, climate-change deniers, are lazy skeptics. True skeptics have to find support for an opposing theory or to disprove the consensus opinion.</p>	 <p><i>Incrédulité de Saint-Thomas</i> Eglise Saint-Nectaire, Puy-de-Dôme 12th Century CE</p>
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The incredulity of Thomas is described in the Gospel of John (20: 24-29):

But Thomas, one of the twelve, called Didymus, was not with them when Jesus came. The other disciples therefore said unto him, We have seen the Lord. But he said unto them, Except I shall see in his hands the print of the nails, and put my finger into the print of the nails, and thrust my hand into his side, I will not believe.

And after eight days again his disciples were within, and Thomas with them: then came Jesus, the doors being shut, and stood in the midst, and said, Peace be unto you. Then saith he to Thomas, Reach hither thy finger, and behold my hands; and reach hither thy hand, and thrust it into my side: and be not faithless, but believing. And Thomas answered and said unto him, My Lord and my God. Jesus saith unto him, Thomas, because thou hast seen me, thou hast believed: blessed are they that have not seen, and yet have believed.



If one is not immunized (blue) when most of the population is immunized (bottom condition), one benefits from herd immunity and stands a good chance of not being infected when there is an outbreak. Once the number of immunized people falls below 90% this benefit no longer occurs and outbreaks can spread quickly through the population (middle and upper conditions). Herd immunity is particularly important for those who cannot be vaccinated, e.g. children that are too young (below 9 months) or children who have other medical problems affecting the immune system.

One out of 1000 children affected with measles will develop encephalitis and brain damage. One or two of 1000 children with measles will die either from pneumonia or from encephalitis. The morbidity and mortality for the disease is over 1000 times more common than for the vaccination.

There are multiple myths about vaccine. The most common are:

- Vaccines cause autism
- Infant immune systems cannot handle so many vaccines
- Natural immunity is better than vaccine-acquired immunity

There is no evidence supporting these claims

<https://www.publichealth.org/public-awareness/understanding-vaccines/vaccine-myths-debunked/>

Science and Pseudoscience

A scientific statement is one that can be falsified by experience. A statement that fits the data, but which cannot possibly be falsified, is not science.

For example, the statement that God created the universe 6000 years ago but created it to appear as if it had evolved over billions of years, is not scientific.

Alternative medicine is rife with pseudoscientific treatments that purport to cure ailments through mechanisms unknown to conventional science. These treatments can alleviate suffering through a placebo effect.



Crystal healing

Among the more popular alternative medicines are:

Homeopathy – based on the idea that “like cures like” homeopaths use toxins in extremely diluted form (sometimes so diluted that there is none of the original material present, but the water maintains a “memory” of the toxin)

Acupuncture – using needles to manipulate the distribution of energy in the body.

Ayurveda – adjusting the humors according to ancient Indian ideas

Chiropractic – adjusting the spine to correct its misalignment

Crystal Healing – using semi-precious stones to create a healing grid around the body

Cupping – using heated cups to suck out toxins

Moxibustion – burning mugwort on the skin

Naturopathy – controlling disease by adjusting the vital forces through “natural” treatments such as diet, massage, exercise, enemas, etc.

Ear candling – placing burning candles in the ears to suck out toxins.

Alternative medicine is popular both because of its placebo effects (it can make you feel better) and because conventional practitioners have neither the cure for all ailments nor the time to spend with the patients. There is no doubt that placebo works – perhaps through the interactions between the believing brain and the body’s immune and endocrine systems.

Religious Pluralism

Truth is One, though the sages know it variously.
(*Rig Veda* 1:164:46)

In my Father's house are many mansions: if it were not so, I would have told you. I go to prepare a place for you.
(*John* 14:2)

The Lamps are different, but the Light is the same; it comes from Beyond. (*Jalal ad-Din Muhammad Rumi*)

Painting in Jain Temple

The Hindu concept of religious pluralism is known as *istadevata*. Believers choose which of the (Hindu) gods they wish to worship. The 5 most commonly worshipped are Vishnu, Shiva, Ganesh, Shakti (Divine Mother), Surya (Sun God).

In Jainism the concept of religious pluralism is called *anekantaveda* (not+one+side+doctrine). The Jain painting shows the parable of the blind men describing an elephant. Jainism is an ancient religion that shares many of the beliefs of Hinduism. It is considered transtheistic – neither theistic nor atheistic. It respects all life forms, and eschews violence in any form.

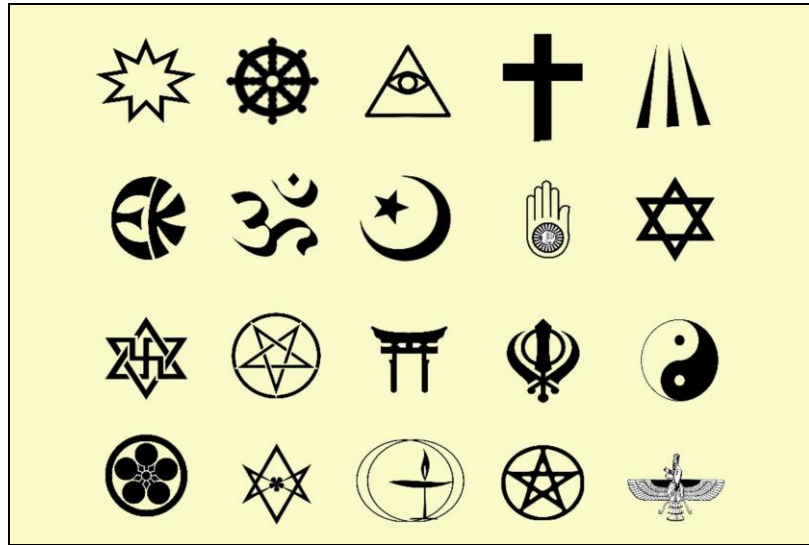
Roman Catholicism produced a *Declaration on the Relation of the Church with Non-Christian Religions* called *Nosta aetate* (in our time) in 1965. This recognized that other religions may teach some aspects of the truth. However, the church maintained that the only way to salvation is through Christ: “I am the way, and the truth, and the life; no one comes to the Father, but by me” (*John* 14:6). This statement comes a scant 4 verses after “In my Father's house are many mansions: if it were not so, I would have told you. I go to prepare a place for you.” (*John* 14:2)

Rumi was a Sufi poet (or a poet with Sufi leanings) who lived in the 13th Century CE. Sufism is usually considered to be part of Islam though believers in the ultra-conservative Salafism consider Sufism a heresy.

There are 3 approaches to the fact that there are multiple religions:

- exclusivism – our religion is the only true religion; all other religions are false.
- inclusivism – our religion is the only completely true religion; other religions are partially true.
- pluralism – all religions provide a way to interact with the transcendent.

The logical problem of the existence of different religions concerns why the divine would manifest itself so completely differently at different times and to different people. Unless the divine was indifferent to human beings, and human beings incapable of understanding it properly.



There are many different religions in the world. This illustration shows the symbols for Baha'i, Buddhism, Caodaism, Christianity, Druidism, Eckankar, Hinduism, Islam Jainism, Judaism, Raëlism, Satanism, Shinto, Sikhism, Taoism, Tenrikyo, Thelema, Unitarian, Wicca, Zoroastrianism

Some of these combine different aspects of other religions: Caodaism combines Buddhism, Taoism and Confucianism; Tenrikyo combines Shinto and Buddhist practices; Thelema uses gods from Ancient Egypt and some ideas from Ancient Greek philosophy.

Some are recent and have bizarre beliefs: Eckankar believes in soul travel; Raëlism believes in that human life was created by extraterrestrials who still visit earth in spaceships. spaceships. Their very recency makes them suspect; as one of the characters in *Angels in America* remarks “Any religion that's not at least two thousand years old is a cult.” However, the beliefs of the long established religions are just as strange if considered objectively.

Some issues that must be raised from the existence of so many contradictory belief systems

1. Does it disprove the existence of a God concerned with the salvation of humanity? Why was he not made manifest in all cultures?

2. Or do all religions portray some aspect of a God who is too big to be captured in a single revelation?

- Does this make any justification for any one religion less convincing. If all the other religions are wrong how can mine be right?
- Religious toleration (e.g. as built into the US constitution 1st amendment) must be fostered. We should not pressure others to convert to our beliefs.

John Hick (1922-2012)

Hick proposed that religion helps us to perceive and interact with a transcendent reality. This reality is the same for the different religions regardless of their specific teachings:

“We should not see the other religions as rivals or enemies, or look down upon them as inferior, but simply as different human responses to the divine reality, formed in the past within different strands of human history and culture.” (1989)



Hick, J. An Interpretation of Religion: Human Responses to the Transcendent (1989)

An interview with John Hick conducted by Robert Lawrence Kuhn on the PBS program *Closer to Truth* can be accessed at:

<https://www.closetotruth.com/series/do-religions-complement-or-contradict#video-2396>

The ideas that Hick presents were also formulated by the German theologian Friedrich Schleiermacher, who wrote in 1831 that the very diversity of the different religious views is necessary to portray the infinite within the limitations of human understanding:

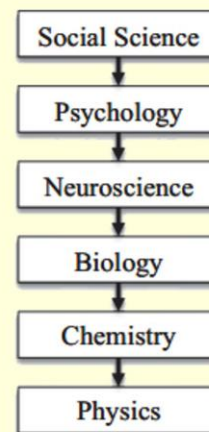
Why have I assumed that religion can only be given fully in a great multitude of forms of the utmost definiteness? Only on grounds that naturally follow from what has been said of the nature of religion. The whole of religion is nothing but the sum of all relations of man to God, apprehended in all the possible ways in which any man can be immediately conscious in His life. In this sense there is but one religion, for it would be but a poverty-stricken and halting life, if all these relations did not exist wherever religion ought to be. Yet all men will not by any means apprehend them in the same way, but quite differently. Now this difference alone is felt and alone can be exhibited while the reduction of all differences is only thought.

Some of the disparate beliefs may be hard to reconcile. The Abrahamic religions believe in a God that is personally involved with humanity. Buddhism, Taoism and Confucianism ultimately do not believe in such a God, if they believe in a God at all. Bodhisattvas can teach us how to end our suffering but they are not divine in the sense of the Yahweh or Allah.

The Unity of Science

Reductionism: Some scientists believe that complex sciences will all ultimately be explained on the basis of simpler sciences, until ultimately everything we know is reduced to a theory of everything in physics.

Emergence: Others have proposed that properties emerge at more complex levels of organization that cannot be explained on the basis of the laws for simple systems. Indeed some phenomena at simple levels can only be explained by processes at higher levels (downward causation).



We have discussed the disunity of religion. Is Science different? Superficially one would assume that all of science is one. However, there are many different sciences and each has its own methods and ideas. Sometimes we try to arrange them in hierarchies. The illustration on the right shows one particular hierarchy – from the point of view of the social sciences. Other hierarchies deal with physical size, e.g. in physics one can go from quantum physics to atomic physics to materials science to geology and ultimately to astronomy and astrophysics. However, these linear hierarchies do not include all areas of a science. In the physics hierarchy where does one fit biophysics?

Some scientists display what may be called “level chauvinism,” believing that their level of science can explain everything. I submit that sociobiology will not explain all human endeavors. Indeed it is difficult to see how the organization of insect societies has any meaning to the organization of human society other than metaphorically. So is there actually a disunity of science?



Evandro Agazzi
(1934-)

[A]ny science considers reality only from a specific restricted “point of view”, expressed through specific predicates that refer only to a selected set of attributes of reality, that are accessible by means of appropriate operations. This is the ground for rejecting as anti-scientific any reductionism. (Agazzi, 1979, as translated by Bernardo, 2015)

Evandro Agazzi, an Italian philosopher, has thought a lot about the different sciences and proposes that they each provide independent views of the world. They are all “scientific” in that they use methods that are objective (independent of the subject) and reproducible. This concept of the sciences disputes any claim that there will ultimately be some Theory of Everything. This approach to the sciences is similar to the pluralistic approach to religion. Each religion provides its own point of view of the transcendent: each science provides its own point of view of reality.

Benefits and Costs of Religion	
Religion promotes morality, charity, peace and forgiveness.	Religion encourages intolerance, violence and war.
Religion provides comfort in times of death and bereavement.	Religion fosters depression by accentuating sin and mortality.
Religion supports the poor and downtrodden.	Religion abuses women and children.
Religion teaches us how to handle aspect of life that cannot be understood by science.	Religion resists science and cultivates an irrational approach to truth
Religion maintains a cadre of priests who can counsel and teach.	Religion supports an idle class of priests who contribute nothing

Is religion helpful? Is religion good for the soul? This slide considers various aspects of religion as they might be seen by those promoting religion (left) or those cynical about anything religious.

There is no time to cover all these aspects of religion. In the next part of this presentation, I shall briefly touch on how religion might comfort us during times of death, how some religions try to convert others to their beliefs through violence, whether irrational faith can ever be justified, and religion’s long history of abuse.



Religion may serve to comfort those who are about to die and those who await the loss of a loved one. The promise of heaven – we shall meet again on the other side – can attenuate the grief. In 1908, Valentine Godé-Darel became the mistress and model of the Swiss painter Ferdinand Hodler. In October 1913, she gave birth to their daughter Paulette. During the pregnancy she developed abdominal cancer. Operations to halt its progression in February and May of 1914 were unsuccessful. For over a year, she lived in pain, finally dying on January 25, 1915. In the final months of her illness, Hodler kept her company, creating several hundred sketches and paintings that document the long process of her dying. This is one of the early sketches. Note the roses are the foot of the bed and the clock on the wall.

Anyone who has attended the deathbed of a loved one knows how much easier it is to promise immortality than to predict oblivion. However, religion may also share part of the blame for our fear of death. This fear of death is greater if we believe that we could be immortal and think that we may be condemned to hell.



This is Paolo Veronese's *Wedding Feast at Cana* from 1563 (Louvre). Feasts are essential to the story of Christ. During the wedding feast at Cana, wherein Jesus turned water into wine. The painting shows the wedding guests dressed as Italian aristocrats. The fellow on the right in his magnificently embroidered robe is impressed by the new wine.

This feast occurred at the beginning of Christ's public ministry. A banquet at the house of Simon, wherein a woman anointed Jesus with oil, occurred just before he entered Jerusalem for the last time.

Many of the parables of Jesus mention celebratory feasts. One parable tells the story of the great man who prepared a banquet for the wedding of his son, but all who were invited provided some excuse. The lord invited in the poor and the lame, but there were still empty seats:

And the lord said unto the servant, Go out into the highways and hedges, and compel them to come in, that my house may be filled (Luke 14:23).

This verse is used to promote the evangelism of the church and even the forced conversion of those who do not believe in the Christian gospel. The term proselytism ("coming toward") means much the same as evangelism ("spreading the good news") but it is often used in a pejorative sense.



Sometimes the urge to spread the gospel and to rescue people from heresy led to crusades. The illustration showing a battle between Crusaders and Saracens is from a medieval book. Saracen heads roll in the dust.

There were four main Crusades to the Holy Land: they began in 1096 and ended in 1291 when the city of Acre fell. Their goal was to free the city of Jerusalem from the Muslim invaders. The Crusades resulted in much bloodshed. A Christian Kingdom of Jerusalem was established twice (1099-1187 and 1192-1291) but the city was finally ceded to the Muslim powers.

The crusades were mainly waged against Muslim forces. However, crusades were also undertaken against heretics, such as the Cathares in Southern France (1209-1229). In 1204 the Crusaders sacked the city of Constantinople, which at that time was Greek Orthodox.



The anonymous portrait is from the early 17th Century. Ricci was probably the most honorable of the Christian missionaries who attempted to evangelize the peoples of the East. In 1560 Portuguese missionaries to Goa on the Western coast of India instituted an Inquisition which persecuted the Hindu people who continued to practice their religion, and destroyed Hindu temples. This differed from the Islamic Mughal Empire which ruled most of the rest of India and which was far more tolerant.



Portuguese Jesuit missionaries first came to Japan in 1549. Many poor Japanese converted to the new religion. However during the Tokugawa Shogunate which began in 1600, Japanese aristocrats decided that Christianity was disrupting their society. Priests and believers were martyred. This is the setting for the 2016 movie *Silence*, directed by Martin Scorsese, and based on the 1966 novel by Shusaku Endo.

In this particular scene the young missionary Sebastião Rodrigues (Andrew Garfield) is awaiting his martyrdom unless he apostatizes (renounces his religion – from Greek to stand apart). However, he finds out from an older missionary (Liam Neeson), who had apostatized already, that it is not him that will be martyred but his converts. They are hung upside down to slowly bleed to death through an incision behind the ear.

The novel and the movie raise deep issues about religion, conversion and apostasy. Was the Japanese government right to prevent the conversion of its people? Should the priest apostatize? Why does God not come to the aid of his people? Why is He silent?



Islam promotes *jihad*. This can be interpreted as the striving toward goodness, the conversion of others to the true faith or religious war. The illustration shows a soldier of ISIS – the Islamic State in Syria. This group believes in violent jihad.

The upper part of the flag is the beginning of the *shahada* (testimony, creed) of Islam
There is no god but Allah. (*lâ ilâha illa Allâh*)

The script within the circle completes the shahada – the format makes it appear as the seal of the prophet

Mohammed is the messenger of God. (*Mohammedan rasûlu Allâh*)

In professing the faith these two statements are prefaced by the words “Ash hadu an” (I testify that) – as in the audio clip.

For a devout Muslim seeing the shahada on the flag of ISIS must be devastating.



One of the great sins of organized religion is the abuse of children. This has taken many forms. Often it is sanctioned or even promoted by governments that are not overtly religious. In Canada indigenous children were taken away from their families and sent to residential schools that were little different from prisons. These are four pictures from Robert Houle's 2009 *Sandy Bay Residential School* series. The pictures were made with an oil stick. Upper pictures show *Schoolhouse* and *Pretending to Pray*. Lower pictures show *Noodin is my Friend* and *Night Predator*. Note the relations between "pray" and "prey." The power of the pictures come from their simple childlike style. As well as painting, Robert Houle (1947-) taught at the Ontario College of Art and Design, and was curator of Indigenous Art at the National Museum of Man in Ottawa.

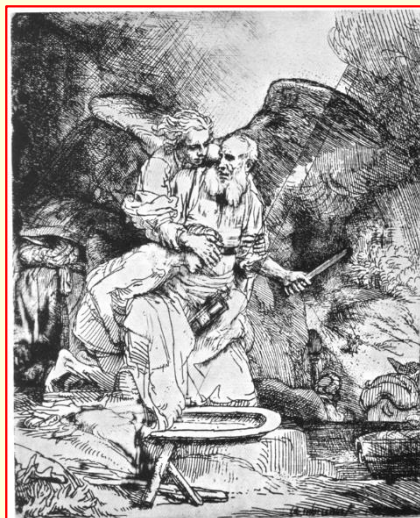
Abuse occurs in all religions. It has become most evident in the Catholic Church. Its most damning aspect is the cover-up. A strange perversion of the idea that one must forgive the sinner. Forgiveness is good but not at the expense of further victims.

The Akedah

And it came to pass after these things, that God did tempt Abraham, and said unto him, Abraham: and he said, Behold, here I am.

And he said, Take now thy son, thine only son Isaac, whom thou lovest, and get thee into the land of Moriah; and offer him there for a burnt offering upon one of the mountains which I will tell thee of.

(Genesis 22: 1-2)



This section on the roles of religion in society concludes with some thoughts about the story of the Akedah as told in Genesis 22.

Does this story teach us about faith or warn us of the irrational?

¹ And it came to pass after these things, that God did tempt Abraham, and said unto him, Abraham: and he said, Behold, here I am.

² And he said, Take now thy son, thine only son Isaac, whom thou lovest, and get thee into the land of Moriah; and offer him there for a burnt offering upon one of the mountains which I will tell thee of.

³ And Abraham rose up early in the morning, and saddled his ass, and took two of his young men with him, and Isaac his son, and clave the wood for the burnt offering, and rose up, and went unto the place of which God had told him.

⁴ Then on the third day Abraham lifted up his eyes, and saw the place afar off.

⁵ And Abraham said unto his young men, Abide ye here with the ass; and I and the lad will go yonder and worship, and come again to you.

⁶ And Abraham took the wood of the burnt offering, and laid it upon Isaac his son; and he took the fire in his hand, and a knife; and they went both of them together.

⁷ And Isaac spake unto Abraham his father, and said, My father: and he said, Here am I, my son. And he said, Behold the fire and the wood: but where is the lamb for a burnt offering?

⁸ And Abraham said, My son, God will provide himself a lamb for a burnt offering: so they went both of them together.

⁹ And they came to the place which God had told him of; and Abraham built an altar there, and laid the wood in order, and bound Isaac his son, and laid him on the altar upon the wood.

¹⁰ And Abraham stretched forth his hand, and took the knife to slay his son.

¹¹ And the angel of the Lord called unto him out of heaven, and said, Abraham, Abraham: and he said, Here am I.

¹² And he said, Lay not thine hand upon the lad, neither do thou any thing unto him: for now I know that thou fearest God, seeing thou hast not withheld thy son, thine only son from me.

¹³ And Abraham lifted up his eyes, and looked, and behold behind him a ram caught in a thicket by his horns: and Abraham went and took the ram, and offered him up for a burnt offering in the stead of his son.

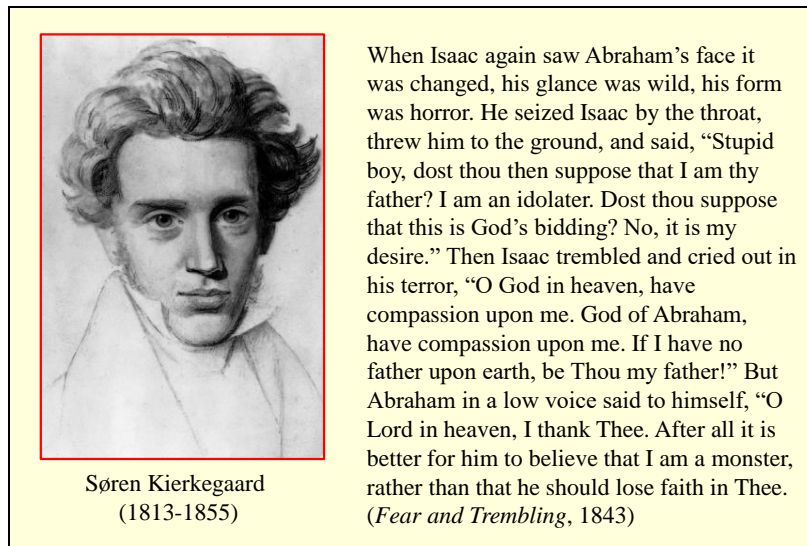
¹⁴ And Abraham called the name of that place Jehovahjireh: as it is said to this day, In the mount of the Lord it shall be seen.

¹⁵ And the angel of the Lord called unto Abraham out of heaven the second time,

¹⁶ And said, By myself have I sworn, saith the Lord, for because thou hast done this thing, and hast not withheld thy son, thine only son:

¹⁷ That in blessing I will bless thee, and in multiplying I will multiply thy seed as the stars of the heaven, and as the sand which is upon the sea shore; and thy seed shall possess the gate of his enemies;

¹⁸ And in thy seed shall all the nations of the earth be blessed; because thou hast obeyed my voice.



The portrait (~ 1840) was made by Kierkegaard's cousin Niels Christian Kierkegaard.

This quotation is from a series of re-imaginings of the *Akedah* story at the beginning of *Fear and Trembling*, as Kierkegaard tries to understand the meaning of this story.

He imagines the story from the point of view of Isaac as well as Abraham. In this particular imagining Kierkegaard has Abraham try to take the blame away from God.



The senseless sacrifice of people for the "greater good" has long plagued human history. The more than 15 million who died in World War I, died because their elders could not negotiate a peace. As Kipling said in his *Epitaphs of the War*

If any question why we died,
Tell them, because our fathers lied.

<https://www.poetryfoundation.org/poems/57409/epitaphs-of-the-war>

The 1997 movie *Behind the Lines* was based on Pat Barker's novel *Regeneration*. This deals with the experience of several shell-shocked soldiers who were treated at the Craiglockhart hospital in Scotland. This clip shows the death of Wilfred Owen (Stuart Bunce) and the response of Dr. Rivers (played by Jonathan Pryce) to the letter from Siegfried Sassoon (James Wilby) informing him of the death of Owen after he had returned to France. The poem *The Parable of the Old Man and the Young* is one of the last poems that Owen wrote before returning to France, where he died one week before the war ended.

The Parable of the Old Man and the Young

So Abram rose, and clave the wood, and went,
And took the fire with him, and a knife.
And as they sojourned both of them together,
Isaac the first-born spake and said, My Father,
Behold the preparations, fire and iron,
But where the lamb for this burnt offering?
Then Abram bound the youth with belts and straps,
And builded parapets and trenches there,
And stretched forth the knife to slay his son.
When lo! an angel called him out of heaven,
Saying, Lay not thy hand upon the lad,
Neither do anything to him. Behold,
A ram, caught in the thicket by its horns;
Offer the Ram of Pride instead of him.
But the old man would not so, but slew his son,
And half the seed of Europe, one by one.

The old men justified the death of the young on the basis of the greater good. Yet their understanding of the greater good was wrong.



Religion and Society

- Heresy
- Blasphemy vs Free Speech
- Apostasy
- Proselytism vs Evangelism
- Religious Education
- Polygamy
- Misogyny
- Taxes
- Abuse
- Support for Irrational Behavior

The illustration shows the logo of the Spanish *Apostasia* movement which urges citizens to defect from the Church.

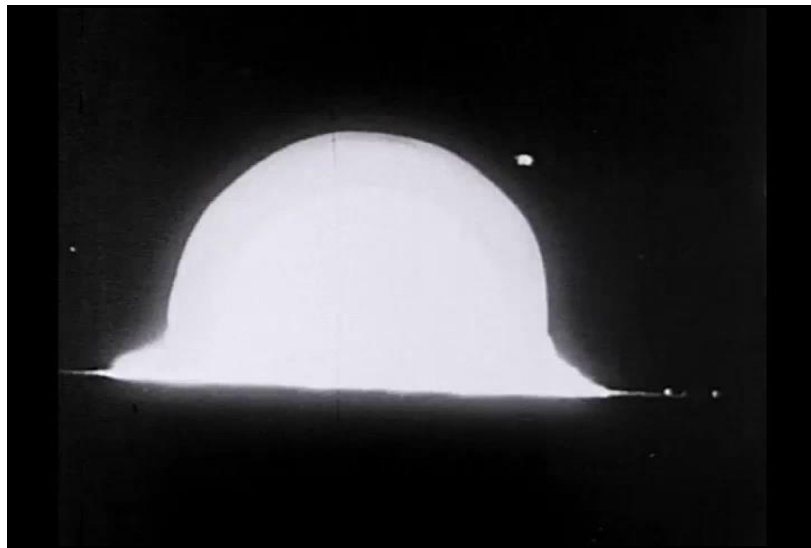
This slide lists the main issues concerning the relations between Religion and Society. In many countries, heresy, blasphemy and apostasy are considered crimes. This goes against any idea of natural law or human rights. In Japan during the 16th to 19th century it was a crime to try to convert any Japanese person to Christianity. Is it justified to prevent people from hearing about other world views?

In relation to religious education a statement attributed to Ignatius Loyola: “Give me the child for the first seven years and I will give you the man.” Should we not provide religious education?

Polygamy is supported in various religions. Is it wrong?

Are all religions basically misogynist? There are no religions (even Wicca) wherein the priests are mainly female. Yet women are significantly more committed to religion than men.

Should religions not pay their taxes? Should Scientology?



I have suggested that religion may not have lived up to its responsibilities.

We can also question whether science has always done the right thing.

This is a set of clips from the Trinity Test on July 16 1945; the first explosion of an atomic bomb in the desert of New Mexico.

<http://www.atomcentral.com/>

**J. Robert
Oppenheimer
(1904-1967)**

We knew the world
would not be the same. A
few people laughed, a
few people cried, most
people were silent.



I remembered the line from the Hindu scripture, the *Bhagavad-Gita*. Vishnu is trying to persuade the Prince that he should do his duty and to impress him takes on his multi-armed form and says, "Now, I am become Death, the destroyer of worlds." I suppose we all thought that one way or another.

The video clip shows Oppenheimer remembering the Trinity Test.

<http://www.trinityremembered.com/video/quote.html>

Oppenheimer's comments are from a TV documentary 1965, not long before he died.

The Atomic Age

1938: Nuclear fission
demonstrated

August, 1939: Szilard-
Einstein letter

January, 1942:
Manhattan Project

July 16, 1945: Trinity
Test

August 6, 1945:
Hiroshima

August 9, 1945:
Nagasaki



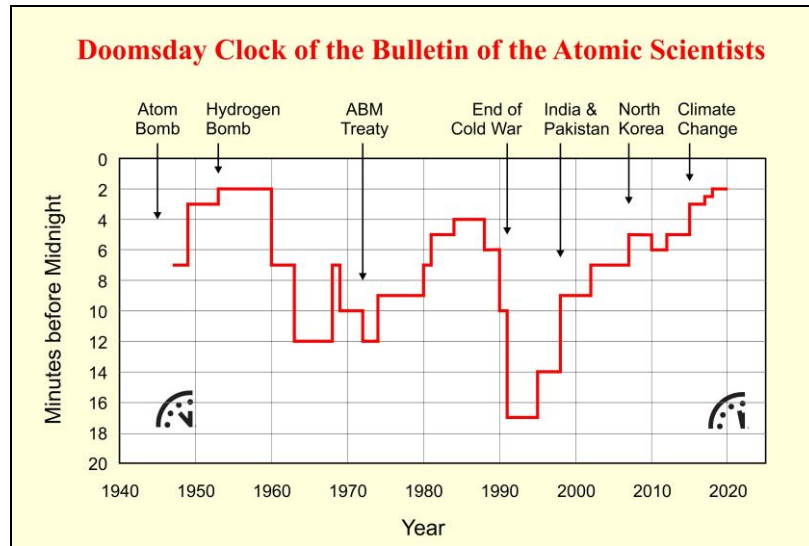
The Manhattan Project was set up to isolate the necessary uranium isotopes (Oak Ridge, Tennessee), understand the physics of nuclear fission (Chicago), and build a bomb (Los Alamos, New Mexico) – all before Germany or Japan could do the same. Atomic bombs were dropped on Hiroshima on August 6, 1945 and on Nagasaki on August 9, 1945. Should scientists have made the bomb? Should it have been dropped on the two Japanese cities?

The video shows a test of an atomic bomb in 1953.

This is from Peter Kuran's Atomcentral website

<http://www.atomcentral.com/>

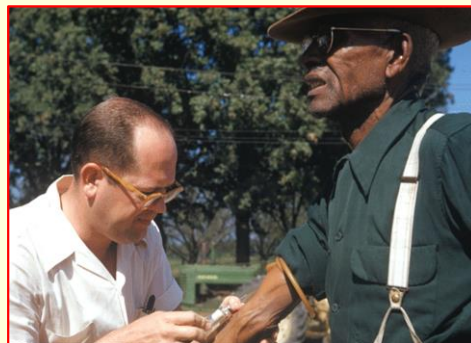
Many scientists were unsure of what they had done. And they were very worried that atomic warfare would lead to the end of the world. Beginning in 1945, they published the Bulletin of the Atomic Scientists to warn the world about the problems of nuclear war. In 1947 they began to indicate how close we were by the doomsday clock.



The doomsday clock, originally designed by Martyl Langsdorf (the wife of one of the physicists on the Manhattan project), made its first appearance in 1947. The initial setting was at 7 minutes to midnight although the original graphic actually read 8 minutes to midnight.

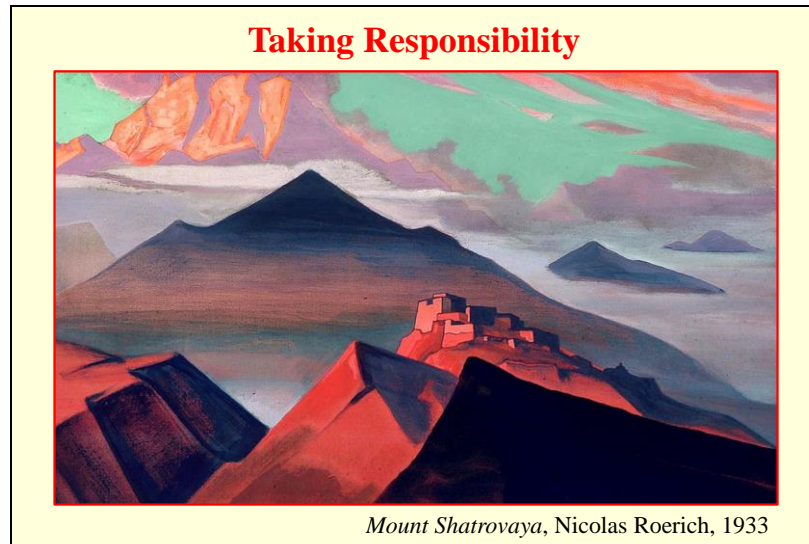
The setting of the clock has varied between 2 minutes (the first hydrogen bomb) and 17 minutes (the end of the Cold War). Climate change has pushed the setting back to 2 minutes.

Tuskegee Study of Untreated Syphilis in the African American (US Public Health Service)



From 1932 to 1972 this study followed the course of syphilis (“bad blood”) in a group of farmers from Tuskegee, Alabama. The physicians took blood tests, documented morbidity and death, and performed post-mortem examinations, but did not treat the patients, despite the fact that penicillin became available as an effective treatment in the late 1940s.

Medicine has also been blind to what is right. The horrific experiments on prisoners in concentration camps in Nazi-controlled Europe led to the Nuremberg Code of 1947, which outlined the principles of research with human subjects. The first of these principles was that of voluntary consent. The 1964 Declaration of Helsinki extended these principles, particularly stressing the need for the subject to be fully informed about the experiment and its risks. What is terrifying is that despite these codes of experimental behavior, the Tuskegee study continued until 1972 despite several whistle blowers who pointed out the study's terrible ethical problems.



Faced by these worldly problems we may wish to retire from religion and from science and live in a monastery in the Himalayas. This picture was painted by Nicolas Roerich, a Russian artist, theosophist and explorer. Like many others in the interval between the two world wars, he searched for refuge, a place of peace. This was called *Shangri-La* in James Hilton's 1933 novel *Lost Horizon*, and *Shambhala* in Roerich's own writings (1930). This mythical Buddhist kingdom in the Himalayas does not exist, and its fictional depiction is far removed from Tibetan Buddhism.

So perhaps we should not flee the world, but rather remain and try to do something about its problems.