

Communication Between Cultures

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Chapter 3 Overview

Worldview: Cultural explanations of life and death

- **Worldview**
- **Religion as an institution**
- **Six great religions of the world**

Worldview defined

A worldview provides a model of the world which guides its adherents in the world.

Helps define reality, instructs individual on how to function within that perceived reality.

Forms of worldview

Religion - traditional organization or distinguishing format

A belief in the existence of a reality greater than the human has served as a definer and creator of cultures.

Unlike spirituality, challenges the collective rather than the individual.

Secularism - Atheism, Agnosticism, Deism, Secular Humanism

Disbelief in or denial of the existence of God

Evolution accepted as fact of life

Spirituality - distinctive from religion

Directly relates to American value of individualism

Each person can use individual resources to discover inner peace

Religion as an institution

- **Addresses Qs of mortality and immortality, suffering, origins of the universe**
- **Richest source of values**
- **Serves as mechanism of social control: religion, perception, behavior linked**
- **Globalism increases potential for extremist clashes**
800 religious denominations in U.S. alone
- **Study of religion exposes us to other centers and calendars, numerous versions of what's sacred and profane, other-cultural deep-structure values**

Numbers, diffusion, relevance basis for selection of this chapter's study of religions

>1 billion Christians

>1 billion Muslims

800 million Hindu

Christian, Islam, Judaism diffused throughout the world

Buddhism, Confucianism two remaining great religions with traditions that have lasted centuries

Similarities in world's great religions

- **speculation**

Creation stories, other explanations of life and death

- **sacred scriptures**

*Spirit-inspired origin, Authority-provided guidance, instruction
Bible, Hebrew Bible, Koran, Vedas, Pali Canon, Analects*

- **rituals**

*symbolic actions that represent religious meaning
perpetuate traditions, re-establish principles, re-affirm beliefs*

- **ethics**

prescription of right and wrong behavior; virtues

- **safe haven**

higher purpose

Christianity

- **Over 1/3 of world's population claims affiliation**

33,800 different denominations; missionary expansion

Roman Catholic, Eastern Orthodox (predominantly Middle East), and Protestant churches

Holy Bible -- Old and New Testaments -- inspired text for followers

- **Core assumptions**

- *Monotheism, Holy Trinity*

- *Original sin, salvation through Christ's sacrifice (death, resurrection)*

- **Other characteristics**

- *organized worship, community*

- *living in the world (acting, doing) rather than withdrawing*

three theological virtues: faith, hope, charity

- *personal conversion, relationship with Creator*

- *future promise of eternal life, so death not to be feared*

- *historical subordination of women*

(life and lessons of Christ suggest increased status of women)

Judaism

- **Less than 2% of world's population**

*One of the most historically significant religions; developed over 4000 years
Generated religious outlook that gave birth to Christianity and Islam
Orthodox, Reformed, Conservative Judaism*

- **Core assumptions**

- *Monotheism with specific type of particularism*
- *No belief in original sin (humans are inherently pure with free will)*
- *Covenant (chosen people) imposes increased responsibilities, obedience to commandments in Torah (first 5 books of Old Testament)*

- **Other characteristics**

- *hardship, suffering, oppression, persecution part of faith, history*
- *Judaism centers on worship of God, practice of good deeds, love of learning*
- *concern, pursuit of social justice*
- *family as locus of worship and devotion*
- *mixed views on afterlife; lack of specific descriptions of life beyond*

Islam

- **20% of world's population, 1.5 billion followers**

fastest growing religion, nearly 7 million members in U.S.

Muhammad (messenger of God) replaced Arab animistic polytheism: religion and

community one and the same; particularism encourages missionary expansion

Koran: sacred wisdom written in Arabic by Muhammad, 114 surahs

- **Core assumptions**

- *Monotheism (Allah is One, there is only One God)*

- *Submission to God and His will; events predestined by Allah's will (fatalism)*

- *Judgment: based on deeds, reward in Paradise or judged to hell*

- *Five Pillars: statement of belief, prayer (5 times a day), alms, fasting, pilgrimage*

- **Other notes**

- *Sunni, Shiite conflict over method of selecting successor to Muhammad*

 - Shiites believe authority should reside in their imams, Sunnis want elected*

- *inner jihad - struggle with self, baser instincts*

- *outer jihad - activities defending, furthering cause of Islam*

- *women instructed in modesty, regional differences in societal roles*

Hinduism

- **Almost 1 billion followers**

*world's oldest known religion; 80% followers in India, 1.5 million in U.S.
no single founder, creed, teacher or prophet acknowledged by all Hindus
no single text acclaimed as primary (Vedas, Upanishads, Bhagavad Gita)*

- **Core assumptions**

- *Vast number of deities, the divine in everything; multiple paths to God*
- *Dharma = duty, religious and communal responsibilities*
- *Karma = ethical standard asserts each act, desire of man shapes future*
- *Nirvana (liberation, true happiness) comes from enlightenment, alternate reality*
- *Brahman = ultimate reality, infinite being/consciousness/bliss*
- *Discovery of “the Self”, meditation excels knowledge*

- **Other characteristics**

- *Hinduism more a culture than a creed; a complete way of life*
- *Four stages of life, very few make it past second stage*
 - 1) student 2) householder 3) forest dweller 4) ascetic
- *Immortality of the soul / Reincarnation*
 - experience of Eternal Self in a particular lifetime ends rebirth*

Buddhism

- **400 million followers**

Numerous forms (Zen, Tibetan, Theravada, Mahayana, Pure Land, Vajrayana, etc).

Shares with Christianity emphasis on power, influence of individual for Christians, Jesus central to faith; for Buddhists, Buddha

Buddha: Indian prince Siddhartha Gautama became The Enlightened One (563 BC)

- **Core assumptions, other characteristics**

- *Buddha not a God, but a man that became enlightened (“I am awake”)*

- *Humanistic; focus on present existence, silent on heaven, hell, creation*

- *Individuals challenged to seek truth through personal effort, intelligence
mental purity, correct understanding key / no external source*

- *Language deceptive; supreme truth not conveyed by words*

- *Four Noble Truths:*

 - dukkha - life is suffering (yours, others')*

 - tanha - origins of suffering (craving, self-delusion, ignorance)*

 - End of Suffering - freedom from unhappiness caused by suffering origins*

 - The remedy - following Eightfold Path, achieving nirvana*

- *Eightfold Path: right view, right purpose, right speech, right action,
right livelihood, right efforts, right mindfulness, right concentration*

- *No soul (death ends all consciousness); past karma determines rebirth*

Confucianism

- **Over 1 billion followers**

Profound influence in Chinese life, even in antireligious period of Communism

Not formal religion, but system of social, political, ethical, and religious thought

Based on teachings of virtue and duty by Confucius (Kong Fuzi, b 551 BC)

Analects convey philosophy: 20 books written by disciples

- **Core assumptions**

- *Confucius not a God, but teacher; only concerned with moral transformation in present*

- *People basically good, learn correct behavior by example*

- *Commitment to social harmony; social relations, responsibility above individual's*

- *Jen (humanism): harmony, reciprocity, empathy*

- *Li (rituals, rites, proprieties, conventions): outward expression of good manners*

- *Te (power): leadership of character*

- *Wen (the arts): instrument of moral education, peace; arouse the mind*

- **Other characteristics**

- *Different obligatory requirements of different role relationships*

 - loyalty to ruler, filial piety of children to parents, respect for brothers, trust for friends*

- *Encourage indirect communication*

Question: Can the world's great religions learn to talk to each other?

Next ...

**Chapter 4: Culture and the individual -
Cultural identity**

