

# Comparative Worldviews (9.1 ed.)

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Basic Questions	Default Religion	Established Historic Religions						Historic Western Rationalism	Recent Western Thought (Post-Rational)			
	Animistic Folk Religion	Hinduism	Confucianism	Buddhism	Islam	Judaism	Christianity	Naturalism	Nihilism	Existentialism	Postmodernism	New Age
<b>The Ultimate</b>	Spirit beings and their world	Impersonal divine force (Brahman)	Heaven, a creative and impersonal realm	Nothingness	Creator God who has no competitor	One God who is working in the natural and social order	Infinite-Personal God who sustains and relates to the universe He created	Matter is all there is	Matter is all there is, but power is central in our experience	Matter is all there is	Matter is all there is, but power is central in our experience	Impersonal divine force
<b>The Everyday World</b>	Animated by spirit beings	Plaything of capricious gods	Humans and nature in harmony with Heaven	Emptiness masked by false appearance	Created and strictly controlled by God	The context for living out God's commands	Designed by God to be responsibly managed and developed by humans	Natural forces susceptible to human manipulation	Subject to social interpretation	Material reality where we make meaning	Subject to social interpretation	Governed by divine life force
<b>Understanding of History</b>	On-going struggle with the spirit world	Endless cycle of birth, suffering, and death	Heaven's mandate manifested in a harmonious society	Endless cycle of birth, suffering, and death	Shaped by God who expects absolute submission to His will	Centers on the creation of the Jews as God's chosen people	Shaped by human choice, but ultimately directed by God to a final goal	Events reflect evolutionary purpose	Shaped by heroic persons with power	History is about the meaning of events	We all have our stories, but there is no larger master story	Humans, possessing divinity, make history in an evolving world
<b>Human Identity</b>	A powerless being who gains power through the spirit world	A soul that gains experience	One who follows the ethical path of leaders and ancestors	A being caught in an illusion created by desire	One who is created to submit to God	Made in God's image to steward creation	Created in God's image to glorify Him by caring for creation and creating culture	Highly evolved animal or complex machine	As complex machines, humans have neither dignity nor freedom	Self-creator of meaning and morality	Self-creator of meaning and morality	Potential god
<b>How Humans Gain Knowledge</b>	Consult spirits of ancestors	Mystical experience utilizing meditation, tradition, priests, discipline, and scriptures	Through learning and rumination	Realize one's nature	By submitting to God's will, revealed primarily through the Quran and secondarily through reason and research	Debate over the meaning of God's word, along with reason and research	God's revelation, plus reason and research	Reason and research	Truth is an illusion	Subjective and paradoxical	Knowledge is constructed, and truth oppresses	Mystical experience
<b>How Humans Should Live (Ethics)</b>	Appease spirits, honor ancestors, respect community	Fulfill our karmic destiny	Righteous living fosters human harmony	Lead life of moderation according to Noble Eightfold Path	Submit to God by obeying the Quran and the Hadith	Live a righteous life	Through God's grace, lead a holy life	Ethics evolve, arising from human experience	There are no ethical standards	Choose actions that create meaning in a meaningless world	We construct our ethics, lacking objective standards for justice	Harmony with nature
<b>Fundamental Problem for Humankind</b>	Angry spirits	Endless reincarnations	Personal depravity and social anarchy	Desire	Idolatry (associating something finite with God)	The world is broken and filled with injustice	Human sinfulness, including idolatry, pride and unbelief	Belief in the supernatural impedes human progress	The death of God means there is no truth, morality or meaning	We lead absurd, inauthentic lives	Others seek to control us by making us believe their worldviews	Human potential is trapped
<b>Resolution to Problem</b>	Appease the spirits	Become one with ultimate reality	Moral cultivation, appropriate rituals and the application of law	Enlightenment	Universal submission to God	Repair the world until the Messiah comes	Christ restores the sinner and a sinful world	Build the good society on rational, objective, and scientific knowledge	Superior humans make their own rules	Make choices when only absurdity makes sense	Suspicion and distrust	Embrace the spirituality within
<b>Death and Life after Death</b>	Join ancestors in the spirit realm	Reincarnation, or union with Brahman	Soul mysteriously integrated into Heaven	Reincarnation or release from existence	Death is a transition until the Day of Judgment	The dead await God's judgment	Everlasting union with God, based on His forgiveness, or everlasting separation	We cease to exist	We cease to exist	We dread death, but, nevertheless, face it authentically	We cease to exist	Reincarnation or merge with absolute

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cf. James Sire, *The Universe Next Door*, 5<sup>th</sup> ed. (2009)