

*Continuing the author's series on comparative religion, this book deals with religious views of human nature and destiny. The beliefs of six major traditions are presented: the view of Advaita Vedanta that there is one Supreme Self, unfolding into the illusion of individual existence; the Vaishnava belief that there is an infinite number of souls, whose destiny is to be released from material.*

When you look at the night sky or at the images of the Hubble Space Telescope, are you filled with feelings of awe and wonder at the overwhelming beauty and power of the universe? When you are in the midst of nature, in a forest, by the sea, on a mountain peak - do you ever feel a sense of the sacred, like the feeling of being in a vast cathedral? Do you believe that humans should be a part of Nature, rather than set above it? If you can answer yes to all of these questions, then you have pantheistic leanings. Are you sceptical about a "God" other than Nature and the wider Universe, yet feel an emotional need for a recognition of something greater than your own self or than the human race? If so, then scientific pantheism is very probably your natural philosophical or spiritual home. Pantheism is older than Buddhism or Christianity, and may already count hundreds of millions among its members. Many atheists and humanists may be scientific pantheists without realizing it. Scientific pantheism is a modern form of pantheism that deeply reveres the universe and nature and joyfully accepts and embraces life, the body and earth, but does not believe in any supernatural deities, entities or powers. Quiz What Pantheism believes At the heart of pantheism is reverence of the universe as the ultimate focus of reverence, and for the natural earth as sacred. We are talking about the way our senses and our emotions force us to respond to the overwhelming mystery and power that surrounds us. We are part of the universe. Our earth was created from the universe and will one day be reabsorbed into the universe. We are made of the same matter and energy as the universe. We are not in exile here: It is only here that we will ever get the chance to see paradise face to face. If we believe our real home is not here but in a land that lies beyond death - if we believe that the numinous is found only in old books, or old buildings, or inside our head, or outside this reality - then we will see this real, vibrant, luminous world as if through a glass darkly. The universe creates us, preserves us, destroys us. It is deep and old beyond our ability to reach with our senses. It is beautiful beyond our ability to describe in words. It is complex beyond our ability to fully grasp in science. We must relate to the universe with humility, awe, reverence, celebration and the search for deeper understanding - in many of the ways that believers relate to their God, minus the grovelling worship or the expectation that there is some being out there who can answer our prayers. This overwhelming presence is everywhere inside you and outside you and you can never be separated from it. Whatever else is taken from you, this can never be taken from you. Wherever you go, it goes with you. Whatever happens to you, it remains with you. But again we are not talking about supernatural beings. We are saying this: We are part of nature. Nature made us and at our death we will be reabsorbed into nature. We are at home in nature and in our bodies. This is where we belong. This is the only place where we can find and make our paradise, not in some imaginary world on the other side of the grave. If nature is the only paradise, then separation from nature is the only hell. When we destroy nature, we create hell on earth for other species and for ourselves. Nature is our mother, our home, our security, our peace, our past and our future. We should treat natural things and habitats as believers treat their temples and shrines, as sacred - to be revered and preserved in all their intricate and fragile beauty. Top A positive approach to life on earth. Scientific Pantheism offers the most positive and embracing approach to life, the body and nature of any philosophy or religion. Our bodies are not base and evil: Nature is not a reflection of something higher: Life is not a path to somewhere else: We must make the best of while we have it. Scientific Pantheism is rooted in the present world. It reconciles concern for humans, and concern for the planet. It places life, not death, in the focus of our concern. Scientific Pantheism has as its central motto: Healthy mind - healthy body - healthy earth. Healthy mind Pantheism fosters a mind that accepts the world: A mind fully awake to nature, open to new knowledge, responsive to the beauty of the natural world. Pantheism fosters a mind that accepts life, the body, and the self: Pantheism fosters a sane and whole mind that respects reason and evidence, that will not accept key beliefs without rational basis, simply

on the claims of ancient scripture or the assertion of gurus. Pantheism demands no faith in impossible events and secret revelations. Pantheism satisfies our need to revere something greater than ourselves - yet never turns its back on the earth, and never departs from the evidence before us. Pantheism fuses spirituality and science, mind and body, humans and nature. Healthy body Transcendental religions - especially primitive Christianity and Theravada Buddhism - have a negative attitude to the body. The body is seen as a temporary container for the soul, or as a disgusting bag of foul substances. Pantheism has a totally positive attitude. The body is natural and is sacred like every other part of nature. Looking after the body, preserving its health and fitness through a healthy diet and exercise, are things we can and should do without slinking feelings of guilt. Healthy earth For transcendental religions the whole earth, like the body, is merely a temporary stage which will be destroyed before the Last Judgement, or will vanish when we realize that it is mere illusion. But this earth is not a staging post and it is not an illusion. Pantheism affirms the earth and upholds nature as the most sacred temples. Concern for the health of the earth is not just a matter of human survival, not just a matter of preserving diversity and wilderness for our enjoyment. It is a primary spiritual and ethical duty. Top A spiritual approach in keeping with the age of science and environment On the eve of the Third Millennium we have become citizens of the cosmos. Through the eyes of the Hubble telescope we have seen the universe as never before. We have seen the emptiness of space strewn with galaxies as thick as snow. We have seen the birth of stars. We have found planetary discs around many stars. We have found amino acids in space. In this situation it is becoming impossible to believe in gods other than the Universe itself, or gods who created this ungraspable immensity just as a frame for our tiny presence. During this same generation we have lost our citizenship of this earth, and risk losing our delicate foothold in the cosmos. We have acquired the power to modify life, to alter ecosystems, to change the planet itself and threaten the future of every species, including our own. Today we need a spiritual approach that provide powerful backing for environmental action. Yet the three largest Western religions provide only feeble support. In this generation spirituality must come of age and be reborn into the age of space, the age of science, the age of environment. Introduction to this site These pages are intended as a guide to Pantheism: To the theory and practice of Scientific Pantheism - from the self-existence and self-organization of the cosmos and nature, to the ways in which we can cement and celebrate our belonging and connection with them and with each other, and create the social and environmental conditions for everyone to enjoy this connection. Scientific Pantheism is a consistent, non-dualistic, empirical and logical approach to pantheism. To the rich history of Pantheism , represented by thinkers and readings from every tradition - from Hinduism, Buddhism and Taoism to ancient Greece, Rome, Islam and Christianity - and every age, from the sixth century BC to the present day. For completeness, some Christian, Moslem and Jewish panentheists have been included. Panentheists believe that God is greater than the universe, but is also in the universe and nature. The major ideas and debates.

**Chapter 2 : Christian Beliefs about Human Nature - ReligionFacts**

*What do the great world religions say about the soul and its ultimate destiny? This book, the third in Keith Ward's magisterial tetralogy on comparative religion, presents the beliefs of six major traditions about human nature, the way to immortality, and the end of the world.*

The three previous chapters dealt with specific sciences -- physics, astronomy, and biology -- and their philosophical and theological implications. The goal of the present chapter is to compare what biology and the biblical tradition have to say about human nature. I will also occasionally refer to anthropology, psychology, sociology, history, and philosophy, but I do not intend to deal systematically with these disciplines. The basic question is whether evolutionary biology and biblical religion are consistent in their views of human nature. The final section is a brief reflection on the human future in the light of earlier conclusions.

**Biology and Human Nature** We begin with a summary of the scientific evidence concerning the relation of human to nonhuman species, both in evolutionary history and in comparing them today. Next, the claims of sociobiology about the genetic determinants of human behavior are examined, and some differences between cultural and biological evolution are set forth.

**Human Origins** Evidence from molecular biology and from fossil discoveries indicates that human beings and modern African apes are descended from common ancestors. African chimpanzees and gorillas share more than 99 percent of their DNA with that of human beings which would be comparable to the genetic kinship of horses and zebras or of dogs and foxes. *Australopithecus afarensis*, an apelike creature, was walking on two legs some 4 million years ago. In Tanzania, Mary Leakey found footprints of that age, consistent only with an upright posture. In Ethiopia, Donald Johnson found the bones of a short female, dubbed Lucy, who walked on two legs but had long arms and a brain size like that of the great apes, while her teeth show that she was a meat eater. It appears that the move from trees to grassland encouraged upright posture, free hands, and a shift to hunting, long before the development of a larger brain. *Homo erectus*, dating from 1. Archaic forms of *Homo sapiens* appeared , years ago, and the Neanderthals were in Europe , years ago. The Cromagnons made paintings on cave walls and performed burial rituals 30, years ago. Agriculture goes back only 10, years. The earliest known writing, Sumerian, is 6, years old. Techniques for melting metallic ores brought the Bronze Age and then, less than 3, years ago, the Iron Age. Here we have at least the broad outlines of the evolution of both physiology and behavior from nonhuman to human forms and the beginnings of human culture. Some differences of degree are so great that they add up to differences of kind, but without sharp discontinuities. Within a continuous evolutionary process, significant novelty has occurred. The brain has increased not only in size but in complexity and in the addition of new structures with distinctive functions. The human brain itself incorporates this long history. At the base of our brains are the oldest structures, which we share with reptiles and birds; they control respiration, the cardiovascular system, and instinctive behavior, which is rigidly programmed genetically. The midbrain or limbic system, which we share with animals, controls our hormones and emotional life pleasure, fear, sex, hunger, and so forth. The outer layer or neocortex, which is prominent in higher mammals and humans, controls perceptual, cognitive, and communicative processes. The neocortex makes possible more complex forms of language, learning, and intelligence. Chimps lack the vocal organs especially the larynx necessary for articulated speech, but they can be taught to communicate in sign language or with geometric symbols on a computer keyboard. They can combine these symbols into simple sentences. Rumbaugh and others have found evidence of elementary abstract thought. From a few examples, chimps can form general concepts, such as food or tool, and then assign a new object to the correct conceptual category. They can express intentions, make requests, and communicate information to other chimps. But they do suggest that language ability could have evolved gradually. Higher animals seem to have a rudimentary self-awareness. If a chimp sees in a mirror a mark previously placed on its forehead, it will try to remove the mark. But in human beings there is a self-consciousness that seems to be unparalleled. The greater capacity to remember the past, to anticipate the future, and to use abstract symbols liberates us from our immediate time and place. We can imagine possibilities only distantly related to present experience, and we can reflect on

goals going far beyond immediate needs. Humans are aware of their finitude and the inevitability of death, and they ask questions about the meaning of their lives. They construct symbolic worlds through language and the arts. In insects these patterns are for the most part genetically determined; in higher animals there is a greater capacity for learning and individuality. Primates have elaborate social structures and patterns of dominance and submission. Dolphins form close friendships and engage in playful activity. In such species information relevant to survival is transmitted socially, learned by the young from their parents rather than passed on through the genes. But in the case of humans, we have many more ways of transmitting information from generation to generation, including language, writing, the public media, education, and the institutions of society. The discoveries of science, the inventions of technology, the imaginative literature and artistic work of the humanities all testify to human intellectual power and creativity. Despite the presence of unconscious impulses, which Freud has helped us to recognize, we are capable of rational reflection about ourselves. Despite the pressures of social conditioning, we are able to take responsibility for moral choices. Despite the constraints of both genes and culture, we are not completely determined but are agents with at least limited freedom. In short, humanity is part of nature, but a unique part. We are the product of a long evolutionary history and retain a powerful legacy from the past. But we also have creative abilities and potentialities without parallel among the species of the earth. We are biological organisms, but we are also responsible selves. If research in recent decades has at some points found greater similarities with other life forms than had been previously suspected, these findings should lead us to greater respect for those forms, not to the denial of human dignity. At other points contemporary science offers ample testimony of the uniqueness of humanity among the creatures on planet earth.

**Sociobiology and Cultural Evolution** The last two decades have seen the development of sociobiology, the biological study of social behavior in both nonhuman and human species. One interesting example concerns the origins of altruistic behavior. If evolution is the survival of the fittest, how can we explain behavior in which an organism repeatedly jeopardizes its own survival? Social insects such as ants will sacrifice themselves to protect the colony. Worker ants work for the colony; they are sterile and do not even have any descendants. Wilson and others have shown that such behavior reduces the number of descendants an individual will have, but it enhances the survival of close relatives who have many of the same genes. If I share half of my genes with my brother or sister, it will help to perpetuate my genes if I am willing to protect their reproductive futures, even at some risk to my own life. We know today that inbreeding leads to harmful recessive genes and to mentally and physically handicapped children. We can say, therefore, that groups with a taboo against incest were stronger genetically and had a selective advantage over those without such a taboo even if they had no inkling that sexual relations with close relatives could have harmful consequences. Other examples deal with the genetic basis for differences between male and female roles in society. Sociobiologists cite the fact that in many species the males are larger, and they view primate society as male dominated. Studies also show that aggression is associated with the level of male hormones and can be increased or reduced by altering the hormone level. Critics point out that although scientists normally examine alternative hypotheses, Wilson seldom even mentions the cultural explanations that anthropologists have advanced for many of these social phenomena. Anthropologists have asserted that few if any cultures are organized throughout according to the genetic kinship coefficients worked out by Wilson. If human behavior is determined by the genes, there would be little we could do to change it. Yet there is no place for real freedom in his analysis. He suggests that a diversity of genetically programmed sensors and motivators operates in the emotions of the limbic system, among which we can choose those we will favor and those we will suppress or redirect. But these choices are determined by our value systems, which are themselves under genetic control. Only biological knowledge can help us: To chart our destiny means we must shift from automatic control based on our biological properties to precise steering based on biological knowledge. He is confident that genetics and biology will account for all aspects of human life. Throughout is an implicit metaphysics of materialism and occasionally an explicit advocacy of what he calls "scientific materialism. But the historical origins or genetic preconditions of a trait do not provide the last word on its present status. Wilson states that "genes hold culture on a leash. And does not culture also constrain and redirect the effects of genes? Perhaps we should turn his metaphor around and say that culture holds the leash today. Let us then

compare cultural evolution and biological evolution. I suggest that the former is more significant today, and that while there are parallels between them, there are also important differences. First, cultural innovation replaces mutations and genetic recombination as the source of variability. Such innovations are to some extent deliberate and directional; they are certainly not random. New ideas, institutions, and forms of behavior are often creative and imaginative responses to social problems and crises. Here the uniqueness and unpredictability of events in human history are evident. The linguistic meanings and the ideas and reasons of agents are distinctive features of human history, as we saw in chapter 3. We are the product of particular cultural histories. Next, in the competition between ideas, selection occurs through social experience and reinforcement. The most useful ideas are retained in a trial-and-error process, but many factors enter into social judgments of success. Here selection is less harsh than biological selection, because ideas can be rejected without the death of the individuals who hold them. Finally, the transmission of information occurs through memory, language, tradition, education, and social institutions rather than through genes. At each of these stages, change is more rapid and can be more deliberate than in the case of biological evolution. Major changes can take place within a few generations or even within a generation. On the other hand, old ideas can surface again and be revived, so they are not permanently lost, as are the genes of extinct species. Science, like other cultural activities, is in a general sense a product of evolution. Its methods are a refinement of the problem-solving ability and the inductive and deductive reasoning that in simple forms are evident in primates today.

**Chapter 3 : PANTHEISM: Nature, universe, science and religion**

*Religion and Human Nature. Throughout antiquity, religion has been a major aspect of ancient society. It has been a major motivator for incredibly crucial decisions and it has been used as a unifier to bring people together during crucial moments.*

Religion in the Americas Comprehensive Exam Reading The Field This graduate specialization focuses on the ways that religion shapes environmental attitudes and practices in cultures throughout the world. Some of the areas of study within the program include grassroots environmental movements and communities; environmental ethics, philosophy, and theology; sustainable agriculture and food; animals and religion; outdoor recreation; and regional emphases in India, Latin America, and North America. Graduate students have opportunities to become involved in many of these projects. They may also work with departmental faculty involved in the study of Religion in the Americas and Religions of Asia and, beyond the department, in interdisciplinary environmental studies programs elsewhere in the university. Faculty The Department of Religion boasts several widely-recognized scholars in this emerging field. Edelman is particularly concerned with the treatment of animals, respect for all aspects of human life and the earth. In the future he plans to write more about Darwinian evolutionary theory and Hindu thought, drawing on the work of major Hindu thinkers of the 20th century like Swami Vivekananda, Sri Aurobindo, and Radhakrishnan. Anna Peterson has published widely on environmental ethics, religion and social change, and grassroots religious communities. Her books include *Being Human: Ethics, Environment, and Our Place in the World*, which explores the links between understandings of human and non-human nature, and *Seeds of the Kingdom: Utopian Communities in the Americas*, which examines agrarian communities striving for social and ecological sustainability in the U. Her current research examines the gap between expressed environmental values and actual practices, and the theoretical as well as practical significance of this disjuncture. Whitney Sanford teaches and researches in two main areas: Religion and Nature and Religions of Asia, and her current work lies at the intersection of religion, food and agriculture, and social equity. She is currently conducting ethnographic research on the St. Johns River and nearby springs, exploring human attachment to place and water. Her books include *Living Sustainably: Religion and the Fate of Agriculture* and *Singing Krishna: His book Dark Green Religion: Robin Wright teaches on indigenous religious traditions, religion and healing, and contemporary shamanisms. He has conducted extensive field research on indigenous religions of the Amazon region of Brazil. Through his publications, his collaboration with the International Society for the Study of Religion, Nature and Culture, and the American Indian and Indigenous Studies Program, he has worked especially on the relations of humans and nature in indigenous cosmologies throughout the Americas, representations of sacred places in indigenous religions, and the centrality of shamanisms to spiritual connections with the natural world. Among his most important books are: Religion, Medicine, and Healing: Other departmental faculty also contribute to the Religion and Nature program. Vasudha Narayanan, a scholar of religion in South Asia, has published several articles and chapters on Hindu environmental values. The graduate program in Religion and Nature also draws on faculty and resources from across the university, including internationally recognized programs in Interdisciplinary Ecology and Tropical Conservation and Development. Graduate Students Graduate students in Religion and Nature have a broad range of research interests, including the religious and ethical dimensions of fly fishing, wolf reintroduction, sustainability, feminist evolutionary theory, religiously-based agrarian communities, resistance to mountaintop coal removal, sustainable agriculture, conservative Christianity and climate change, sustainability in secondary education, and the work of Mary Midgley. REL Religion and Nature REL Religion and Environmental Ethics; REL Religion, Nature, and Society; at least one course in Asian religious traditions; at least one course in Western religious traditions; a course in either the natural sciences or a course in research methods Students without undergraduate degrees, or graduate coursework or degrees in the natural sciences, will be expected to take at least one course grounded in the natural sciences, as approved by their graduate committee. The oral examination will be based on the answers to the written examinations. Most students will take the above four exams. Alternatives may be approved by*

the mutual agreement of the committee and student. A student taking a global, comparative approach, for example, may propose taking for the fourth exam, a second region, discipline or tradition-based exam, such as both religion and nature in Eastern hemisphere and religion and nature in the Western hemisphere.

*Christian Beliefs about Human Nature Fundamental to the Christian understanding of human nature is the belief that the first humans were created in the image of God (imago Dei). This derives from Genesis , which declares.*

Share Religion and Human Nature Throughout antiquity, religion has been a major aspect of ancient society. It has been a major motivator for incredibly crucial decisions and it has been used as a unifier to bring people together during crucial moments. The issue of religion is thusly an interesting thing to pay attention to in the writings of the many historians of the time. Some historians choose to simply dismiss it to remain totally objective while others choose to include it into their stories. One important historian who tries to stay away from the topic of religion is Thucydides. Being known for his objectivity, Thucydides prefers to provide both a religious and scientific explanation for certain events that transpired. While Thucydides and other historians may choose to do this, others still prefer to include the bias of religion in their accounts of specific events. Herodotus and Livy are two historians who come to mind when considering this. These two writers openly discuss the role of religion and even offer personal opinions about certain situations. From then on Romulus was no longer on earth On the surface it seems like these historians probably just included religion to make their stories more dramatic, but there is also a much deeper meaning for this use of religion. It is easy to just dismiss these uses of religion as simple evidence of bias or subjectivity. Why do they choose to include religion? One possible answer to this question is that, rather than being biased and subjective, they are in fact using religion as a tool. Religion is being used as a tool to reflect upon the society of the time and the way people behave. As it is such a major part of society in antiquity, it is quite plausible to believe that the historians felt that religion needed to be properly represented in their accounts of history. It appears as though when times are prosperous and good, religion begins to fall to the wayside as people begin to ignore it or not uphold its values as much as they used to. It works the other way also in that when there is chaos or general suffering, everybody seems to rush back to religion in hopes of fixing everything. This is a very interesting aspect to consider as this does show some interesting things about society during antiquity. This paper will explore these patterns and what the historians were actually trying to say about society through the use of religion. Herodotus likes to discuss religion in his works. His writing style is very unique compared to most other historians of his time. Most regard him as a fairly unbiased historian, but his use of religion in his writing causes some to question the validity of his works. One example of his use of religion is during his telling of the story of Croesus. In this account, Herodotus discusses the rise and fall of the ruler of Lydia named Croesus. As his story progresses, Croesus brings prosperity and good fortune to his land. However, at one point Croesus went to Delphi to obtain a prophecy about how to behave as a ruler. At Delphi, an oracle warns Croesus about the fickleness of good fortune and how he was going to end up destroying an empire. Since Croesus was enjoying such good luck recently, he ended up ignoring what the oracle had warned him about. Croesus decided to go ahead and attempted to attack Cyrus and the Persians. Herodotus continues this story by explaining how since Croesus clearly misunderstood the prophecy and that this was his own fault. This account is a great example of how Herodotus uses religion as a tool to show natural human nature. Humans have a natural tendency to become overzealous and greedy when they are greeted with good fortune. This will cloud their judgment and at some point cause them to make a mistake that will ruin all of their prosperity. Herodotus uses religion to explain this phenomenon by saying that the gods will do whatever it takes to prevent any humans from experiencing too long of a period of wealth and prosperity. Much like Herodotus, Livy enjoys discussing the role of religion and decision-making. The story of Tullus Hostilius and the plague is one that shows this use of religion as a tool. In this episode, Livy discusses the effects of disrespecting the gods. A plague had hit Rome and was not only it devastating to the population of Rome, but Tullus himself caught the illness. It was only until that point that Tullus tried to appease the gods for help. Once he got sick, he became one of the most superstitious men in Rome. What happened to Tullus is a perfect example of how when things are bad, people tend to flock back to religion for help. This account by Livy shows exactly what this essay is trying to prove. At first, when things were going well, Tullus begins ignoring

the gods. However, once there is some sort of crisis, the first thing that Tullus does is become super religious in hopes of fixing everything. This says something about the role of religion in society during antiquity. Although Livy is Roman and does not write his works until much later than Herodotus, his techniques appear to be very similar to Herodotus. The ways these two historians choose to use religion in their stories are clearly very purposeful and deliberate. The use of religion may appear to make them seem unscientific and therefore less reliable. However, it is because of this use of religion that they actually gain a new way of subtly making a commentary on the decisions societies made. These historians use the strength of faith throughout different scenarios to show the fickleness of human nature. When things are going well, people start forgetting religion, but the moment anything goes wrong, everybody suddenly becomes extremely religious. This insight into the minds of the people of the time is something only provided by historians such as Herodotus and Livy. It is because of their use of religion that we can begin to better understand the actions of these people and the motivation for these decisions.

**Chapter 5 : Religious Principle in Human Nature**

*Human nature in non-Western world religions. The variety of ways to understand human nature is expressed also in different world religions. In Hinduism and Buddhism human nature is partly understood from the perspective of the self as part of all that is, and given the task of becoming the non-self. Like other pantheistic religions, both Hinduism and Buddhism affirm that human beings are related to all that is and, simultaneously, how the self is essentially divine.*

Bring fact-checked results to the top of your browser search. Human nature In the Zoroastrian formulation of the myth of creation, humans are created for the noble purpose of aiding in the repulsion of the Evil Spirit. Whether or not this concept is pre-Zoroastrian, it shows that in Iranian religion human nature was held to be essentially good, in the sense that there was no myth about the baseness of the human condition such as that found in Babylonian mythology for example, in the Enuma elish. Humans have free will and determine their own destinies as a result of their ethical choices. The fravarti is a deity who acts as a protective spirit of each individual and is also an ancestor spirit; together, all the fravartis form a warrior band, similar in some ways to the Vedic Maruts. In both the religion of Zarathustra and that of Darius and Xerxes , he was worshipped as the supreme god, almost to the exclusion of all others. First of all he is the creator of the universe and the one who establishes and maintains the cosmic and social order, arta. Who established the paths of the sun and the stars? Who is it through whom the moon now waxes now wanes? Who supports the earth below and keeps the heavens above from falling down? Who yokes the two steeds to the wind and the clouds? Who madeâ€¦a son respectful of his father? As his name implies, he seems to have been sought by his worshippers for wisdom and insight, and, to judge by the intense experiences of Darius whether or not his professions are genuine and of Zarathustra, he was probably the object of a personal devotion that appears to have been lacking with other deities. Although the ancient pantheon contained an individual sun god , Hvar Khshaita, in the eastern Iranian traditions reflected in the Avesta, Mithra has a hint of connection with the sun, more specifically with the first rays of dawn as he drives forth in his chariot. In his capacity to find out the covenant breaker, he is described as sleepless, ever-waking, and having 1, ears, 10, eyes, and a wide outlook. He is portrayed as a great warrior brandishing his mace while driving in his chariot to battle, where he intervenes on behalf of those faithful to treaties by throwing the treaty breakers mithra-drug into panic and defeat. It should be mentioned that Mithra gave his name to a mystery religion , Mithraism , which was popular throughout the Roman Empire but whose Iranian origins are difficult to trace. In this role, she brings fresh water to the earth, filling streams, rivers, and seas as she flows from Mount Hukarya to the Varu-Karta sea. Unlike any other Iranian deity, she is described in great detail in the Yashts, especially in respect to her clothing and ornamentation, to such an extent that one assumes a dressed cult image must be the source of the description. This is confirmed by the fact that Artaxerxes II mentions her. Then, too, the Babylonian historian Berosus reports that this king had many images of her made and distributed. There were other striking similarities: In addition, both goddesses were important for fertility. Vrthraghna The mighty deity of war Vrthraghna had martial traits in common with Mithra and with the Vedic war god Indra. In post-Achaemenian times he was syncretistically equated with Hercules and was a favourite deity of monarchs, some of whom took his name. For the earliest immigrants onto the Iranian plateau, he personified aspirations of the those seeking to win new territory from an entrenched indigenous population. For later populations, he became the divine manifestation of the will to world conquest. Among all the deities, Vrthraghna preeminently possessed the power to undergo various transformations, both anthropomorphic and theriomorphic. Rich mythologies may have existed concerning these avatars, but only 10 forms have been recorded: All have in common aggressive force and virility, while in some violence is conspicuous. In particular, he appears to have been the god of oaths and ordeals administered during trials. In many ways he carried out the judicial functions of the Vedic god Varuna , who, among other things, was the ultimate judge presiding over oaths and who was frequently inseparable from the Vedic Mitra. An entire Yasht is devoted to Tishtrya, who, for reasons that remain obscure, is identified with the star Sirius. In a combat that was reenacted in a yearly equestrian ritual , Tishtrya and Apausha, assuming the forms of a white stallion and a horse of horrible description, respectively, battle along the shores of the

Varu-Karta sea.

Chapter 6 : Human nature - Wikipedia

*This is really a two-part question. Firstly "Is religion a part of human nature? I believe the answer here is an unequivocal 'yes', for two reasons. Hundreds of thousands of years ago when mankind was first starting to think about the world surrounding him, as opposed to it simply just being there in the way it is to other species, he began to question why certain things happened.*

No coin minted of his appearance? There were coins of Alexander the Great minted years before May 20, at And He gave you the hearing, the eyesight, and the brains; rarely are you thankful. He sends inspiration, bearing His commands, to whomever He chooses from among His servants, to warn about the Day of Summoning. To whom belongs all sovereignty on that day? Prepare for the Big Day [ There will be no injustice on that day. GOD is most efficient in reckoning. The transgressors will have no friend nor an intercessor to be obeyed. Think Heavens was meant for the skies and space between About people dying as physical form they are alive in other unseen or felt form such as spiritual form but in some place that is called "Isthmus" that is a passage between the going on life on earth and the "End of Life on Earth" day of resurrection! May 19, at 6: He asked me what that was. Daddy we have a dead squirrel at the end of our driveway. I told him to try to not laugh because many people think it is true. Some of us are born skeptical I think. Now my son represents an N of one, but so much for "innate" tendencies. I agree with other posters. I read Norse and Greek mythology to my son. He loves the stories, but he also equates them with his other fictional books and clearly knows the difference between fiction and non-fiction most of the time. May 19, at The grave is either the garden of Paradise or the pit of Hell-Fire.

**Chapter 7 : Religion & Nature – Religion**

*The £ million international project, led by Oxford University academics, sought to discover whether beliefs in gods and an afterlife were learned or simply part of human nature.*

Human Nature and God Religion presents each and every fundamental psychological force that makes us tick as an attribute or quality of god. Nothing significant is left out. I am not interested in praising religion nor in criticizing it. I am trying to understand people, and to do that, I need to study them in both secular life and in spiritual life. My expertise is the psychology of motivation and values, or what makes people tick. The results of my scientific research may suggest new ideas about the fundamental forces that drive us and how those forces are expressed in spirituality and religion. My analysis suggests a close correspondence between the attributes of God and the fundamental motives driving the human psyche. If you want to identify what makes us tick, you may need to look no further than the divine attributes of the gods we worship. These attributes include, for example, infinite goodness, infinite wisdom, and so on. As we shall see there are 13 such qualities expressed as divine attributes. Each is a powerful motivator of human behavior. Religion presents each and every fundamental psychological force that makes us tick as an attribute or quality of god. Scientists have spent decades studying biology, the unconscious mind, and the brain to create lists of human instincts, psychological needs, fundamental psychological forces, and intrinsic motives. Arguably, they could have created a comprehensive and valid list by studying the qualities of the gods people worship. My colleagues and I asked many thousands of people from the diverse cultures living on four continents what intrinsically motivates them. By "intrinsic motivation," I mean what do people want simply because they inherently value it. We asked no questions about God, religion, or spirituality. We followed conventional scientific rules to analyze the results of the surveys and to construct our list of intrinsic motives. As explained in my book, *The 16 Strivings for God: The New Psychology of Religious Experiences*, we discovered 16 basic desires of human nature. Everyone shares each of the 16 basic desires but people prioritize them differently. An intellectual might prioritize curiosity, for example, while a gregarious person might prioritize social contact. How a person prioritizes the 16 basic desires determines his or her personality traits and relationships. In my book *The 16 Strivings for God: The New Psychology of Religious Experiences*, I suggest that the greatest imaginable expression of 13 of the 16 basic desires are attributes of the Judeo-Christian presentation of God. Here is how I connect motives and divine attributes: Acceptance is one of the 16 basic desires of human nature. Everyone would rather be accepted and praised rather than rejected and criticized. Because salvation is the greatest acceptance human beings can imagine, religion presents God-as-Savior. Curiosity is one of the 16 basic desires of human nature. Everyone would rather understand than be confused. Because omniscience is the greatest imaginable knowledge human beings can imagine, religion present God-as-omniscient. Here is how I connect 11 additional basic desires and divine attributes: God as son Honor: God as moral lawgiver Idealism: God as justice Order: God as perfect order Physical activity: God as friend Status: God as protector Vengeance: Wrath of god The Judeo-Christian God has no body and is not presented as the greatest eater nor greatest lover basic desire for romance , but some say he saves souls. Human beings are incapable of imagining qualities greater than those attributed to the God they worship. Divine attributes are the traits people most admire. Human beings, for example, admire strength. They worship God as Almighty. He is not only strong but also the strongest force in the universe. Nothing is stronger than God. If people came to believe that scientists have discovered a stronger force, they would wonder if God is God. They would worship the stronger force, not the God of the Bible. Human beings admire achievement. They worship God as Creator. Creation is not only an achievement but also the greatest imaginable achievement. Nothing is a more impressive achievement than Creation. If people came to believe that scientists have discovered a greater achievement, they would wonder if God is God. They would worship the Achiever, not the God of the Bible. The correspondence between the attributes of God and intrinsic motivation adds confidence that the 16 basic desires are in fact a valid list of the fundamental forces of human nature. Freud erred in claiming that sex and aggression are the overriding instincts lighting up the human psyche. At most, Freud identified only two of the

fundamental forces driving us in secular and spiritual life. In demonstrating both the spiritual and secular validity of the 16 basic desires, we add significantly to the view that these are the fundamental psychological forces that make us tick.

**Chapter 8 : Human Nature and God | HuffPost**

*Islamic Beliefs About Human Nature According to the Quran, Allah "created man from a clot of blood" at the same time he created the jinn from fire (). Muslims believe humans are the greatest of all creatures, created with free will for the purpose of obeying and serving Allah.*

Overview[ edit ] The concept of nature as a standard by which to make judgments is traditionally said to have begun in Greek philosophy , at least as regards the Western and Middle Eastern languages and perspectives which are heavily influenced by it. By this account, human nature really causes humans to become what they become, and so it exists somehow independently of individual humans. This in turn has been understood as also showing a special connection between human nature and divinity. This approach understands human nature in terms of final and formal causes. In other words, nature itself or a nature-creating divinity has intentions and goals, similar somehow to human intentions and goals, and one of those goals is humanity living naturally. Such understandings of human nature see this nature as an "idea", or " form " of a human. Against this idea of a fixed human nature, the relative malleability of man has been argued especially strongly in recent centuries—firstly by early modernists such as Thomas Hobbes and Jean-Jacques Rousseau. Still more recent scientific perspectives—such as behaviorism , determinism , and the chemical model within modern psychiatry and psychology —claim to be neutral regarding human nature. As in much of modern science, such disciplines seek to explain with little or no recourse to metaphysical causation. Classical Greek philosophy[ edit ] Main article: According to Aristotle , the philosophical study of human nature itself originated with Socrates , who turned philosophy from study of the heavens to study of the human things. The Socratic school was the dominant surviving influence in philosophical discussion in the Middle Ages , amongst Islamic , Christian , and Jewish philosophers. The human soul in the works of Plato and Aristotle has a divided nature, divided in a specifically human way. One part is specifically human and rational, and divided into a part which is rational on its own, and a spirited part which can understand reason. Other parts of the soul are home to desires or passions similar to those found in animals. In both Aristotle and Plato, spiritedness thumos is distinguished from the other passions epithumiai. In his works, apart from using a similar scheme of a divided human soul, some clear statements about human nature are made: Man is a conjugal animal, meaning an animal which is born to couple when an adult, thus building a household oikos and, in more successful cases, a clan or small village still run upon patriarchal lines. This type of community is different in kind from a large family, and requires the special use of human reason. Man loves to use his imagination and not only to make laws and run town councils. He says "we enjoy looking at accurate likenesses of things which are themselves painful to see, obscene beasts, for instance, and corpses. However, the particular teleological idea that humans are "meant" or intended to be something has become much less popular in modern times. Aristotle developed the standard presentation of this approach with his theory of four causes. Every living thing exhibits four aspects or "causes": For example, an oak tree is made of plant cells matter , grew from an acorn effect , exhibits the nature of oak trees form , and grows into a fully mature oak tree end. Human nature is an example of a formal cause, according to Aristotle. Likewise, to become a fully actualized human being including fully actualizing the mind is our end. The cultivation of learning and intellectual growth of the philosopher, which is thereby also the happiest and least painful life. In Chinese thought[ edit ] Human nature is a central question in Chinese philosophy. Christian theology In Christian theology, there are two ways of "conceiving human nature". The first is "spiritual, Biblical, and theistic", whereas the second is "natural, cosmical, and anti-theistic". As William James put it in his study of human nature from a religious perspective, "religion" has a "department of human nature". However, there are some "basic assertions" in all "biblical anthropology". The Bible contains no single "doctrine of human nature". Rather, it provides material for more philosophical descriptions of human nature. Created human nature[ edit ] As originally created, the Bible describes "two elements" in human nature: By this was created a "living soul", that is, a "living person". One is that being created in the image of God distinguishes human nature from that of the beasts. A third is that mankind possesses an inherent ability "to set goals" and move toward them. Both the Old Testament and

the New Testament teach that "sin is universal". This condition is sometimes called "total depravity". However, the "universality of sin" implies a link to Adam. In the New Testament, Paul concurs with the "universality of sin". He also makes explicit what the Old Testament implied: It is in part a "generalization from obvious facts" open to empirical observation. Biologist Richard Dawkins in his *The Selfish Gene* states that "a predominant quality" in a successful surviving gene is "ruthless selfishness". Furthermore, "this gene selfishness will usually give rise to selfishness in individual behavior". White, PhD, [52] finds a "selfish" trait in children from birth, a trait that expresses itself in actions that are "blatantly selfish. Sumner finds such human nature to be universal: Harris calls this condition "intrinsic badness" or "original sin". In their book, *Unto Others: The Evolution and Psychology of Unselfish Behavior*, they propose a theory of multilevel group selection in support of an inherent genetic "altruism" in opposition to the original sin exclusivity for human nature. But the above examples document the return to a "more realistic view" of human nature "as basically sinful and self-centered". Human nature needs "to be regenerated Bacon sometimes wrote as if he accepted the traditional four causes "It is a correct position that "true knowledge is knowledge by causes". And causes again are not improperly distributed into four kinds: But of these the final cause rather corrupts than advances the sciences, except such as have to do with human action. The discovery of the formal is despaired of. The efficient and the material as they are investigated and received, that is, as remote causes, without reference to the latent process leading to the form are but slight and superficial, and contribute little, if anything, to true and active science. Thomas Hobbes, then Giambattista Vico, and David Hume all claimed to be the first to properly use a modern Baconian scientific approach to human things. Hobbes famously followed Descartes in describing humanity as matter in motion, just like machines. In this view, the mind is at birth a "blank slate" without rules, so data are added, and rules for processing them are formed solely by our sensory experiences. He was a contemporary and acquaintance of Hume, writing before the French Revolution and long before Darwin and Freud. He shocked Western civilization with his *Second Discourse* by proposing that humans had once been solitary animals, without reason or language or communities, and had developed these things due to accidents of pre-history. This proposal was also less famously made by Giambattista Vico. In other words, Rousseau argued that human nature was not only not fixed, but not even approximately fixed compared to what had been assumed before him. Humans are political, and rational, and have language now, but originally they had none of these things. Rousseau is also unusual in the extent to which he took the approach of Hobbes, asserting that primitive humans were not even naturally social. A civilized human is therefore not only imbalanced and unhappy because of the mismatch between civilized life and human nature, but unlike Hobbes, Rousseau also became well known for the suggestion that primitive humans had been happier, "noble savages". What human nature did entail, according to Rousseau and the other modernists of the 17th and 18th centuries, were animal-like passions that led humanity to develop language and reasoning, and more complex communities or communities of any kind, according to Rousseau. In contrast to Rousseau, David Hume was a critic of the oversimplifying and systematic approach of Hobbes, Rousseau, and some others whereby, for example, all human nature is assumed to be driven by variations of selfishness. Influenced by Hutcheson and Shaftesbury, he argued against oversimplification. On the one hand, he accepted that, for many political and economic subjects, people could be assumed to be driven by such simple selfishness, and he also wrote of some of the more social aspects of "human nature" as something which could be destroyed, for example if people did not associate in just societies. He was accused of being an atheist. Our examination of causes must stop somewhere.

**Chapter 9 : Chapter 7: Human Nature. â€“ Religion Online**

*By Richard Allen Greene, CNN London (CNN) -- Religion comes naturally, even instinctively, to human beings, a massive new study of cultures all around the world suggests. "We tend to see purpose in the world," Oxford University professor Roger Trigg said Thursday. "We see agency.*

The Lord our God is one Lord: The command thus given to love God with all the heart, and soul, and mind, and strength, is in harmony with our whole nature. We are made for God; all our affections, sensibilities, faculties, and energies are designed to be directed towards God; the end of our existence is fellowship with God. He could not require us to devote our entire being to Himself if He had not endowed it with powers which fit us for such devotion. Religion then has its germs in our Nature, and its development is entrusted to our own care. Such is the truth that I would now illustrate. The fact is as remarkable, as it is incontrovertible, that the race, all but universally, has conceived of some Existence more exalted than man. If there is one principle, indeed, that may be declared to be essential in human nature, it is this unwillingness to shut itself up within its own limits, this tendency to aspire after intercourse with some Divinity. It is true that men at various periods have formed most unworthy conceptions of their objects of worship. Still, by selecting the qualities which they esteemed most highly in themselves, and by enlarging and exalting them without bounds, they have showed, as plainly as have more enlightened ages, the spontaneous longing of the human spirit to rise above itself, and to ally its destiny with a Supreme Power. This simple view is sufficient to prove the grandeur of the Religious Principle. Without doubt, it is the noblest working of Human Nature. In the most immature manifestation of this principle, we behold the budding of those spiritual powers, by which, in the progress of the race, men have attained to the conception of Unbounded Goodness. We see this principle in the creations of genius, in forms of ideal beauty to which poetry and the arts give immortality, in fictions where characters are portrayed surpassing the attainments of real life. We see this principle in the admiration with which stupendous intellect and heroic virtue are hailed, and in the delight with which we follow in history the career of men who in energy and disinterestedness have outstripped their fellows. The desire for an excellence never actually reached by humanity, the aspiration toward that Ideal which we express by the word perfection, this is the seminal principle religion. And this is the root of all progress in the human race. Religion is not an exclusive impulse. It does not grow from an emotion that is centered wholly upon God and seeks no other object. It springs from the same desire for whatever is more Perfect than our own nature and our present life, which has impelled man towards all his great spiritual acquisitions and to all great improvements of society. This principle, as we have seen, prompts the mind to create imaginary beings, and to attach itself with delight to human agents of surpassing power and goodness. But in these objects it can find no rest. These are too frail a support for so sublime an emotion. This principle God implanted for Himself. Through this the human mind corresponds to the Supreme Divinity. This principle, being in its very essence insatiable, partakes of the nature of infinity; no Being but the Infinite One can supply its wants. This view conducts us to an important standard, by which to judge of the Truth and Purity of any form of religion. A religion is true, in proportion the clearness with which it makes manifest the Perfection of God. The purity of a particular system is to be measured by the conception which it inspires of God. Does it raise our thoughts to a Perfect Being? Does it exalt us far above our own nature? Does it introduce us to a grand and glorious Intelligence? Does it expand our minds with venerable and generous conceptions of the Author of existence? I know no other test of a true and pure religion but this. Religion has no excellence, but as it lifts us up into communion with a Nature higher and holier than our own. It is the office of religion to offer the soul an Object for its noblest faculties and affections, a Being through whom it may more surely and vigorously be carried forward to its own perfection. In proportion then as a religion casts clouds around the glory of God, or detracts from the loveliness and grandeur of His character, it is devoid of dignity, and tends to depress the mind. All human systems are necessarily defective. They partake of the limits of the human mind. The purest religion which man ever has adopted, or ever will adopt, must fall very far below the glory of its Object. Our best conceptions of God are undoubtedly mixed with much error. We talk indeed of Truth, as if we held it in its fullness; but in

religion, as elsewhere, we make approaches only to the Truth. We see God in the mirror of our own minds; but these are narrow and in many ways darkened. We see Him in His works; but of these we comprehend a minute portion only. He speaks to us by His spirit in scripture and in the heart; but He speaks to us in human language, and adapts Himself to our weak capacities, so that we catch mere glimpses of His perfection. The Religious Principle itself, by which we perceive and love God, is as limited at birth as are our other faculties, and is gradually unfolded. It embraces error at first by necessity. The earliest idea of God in the child is as faint as are its conceptions of all other objects. Necessarily it invests the Creator with a human form, places Him in the heavens, and clothes Him with an undefined power superior only to that possessed by those around it. This idea, however, of some Being higher than man takes root, and from this religion grows up. As we advance, we throw off more and more our childish notions, purify our thought of God, divest Him of matter, conceive of Him as mind, refine away from Him our passions, and especially assign to Him the attributes which our growing consciences recognize as righteous and holy. Still we are making approaches only, and slow approaches, towards God. Much of earth, much of our own incompleteness, still clings to our conception of the Divinity whom we worship. And the wise man is distinguished by detecting continually whatever is low in his apprehension of God, and by casting it away for more exalted views. And for this purpose I go to Human Nature. All are but so many elements of religion. Look first at the Reason, that divine germ within. I ask you to consider what are the primitive, profoundest, and clearest ideas of Reason. They are the very ideas which lead to God. The earliest inquiry of Reason is into Causes. Even the child breaks his toys to discover the spring of their motion. Reason cannot satisfy itself with observing what exists, but seeks to explore its origin. It asks by instinct, whence comes the order of the universe, and cannot rest until it has ascended to a First Cause. The idea of God is thus involved in the primitive and most universal idea of Reason, and is one of its central principles. Among other tendencies in the Reason to God, one is especially noteworthy. I refer to its desire for comprehensive and connected views. The Reason is never satisfied with beholding objects separately. By its very nature it is impelled to compare them with one another, to discover their similar or diverse properties, to trace their relations, their respective fitnesses, and their common bearing. And it never rejoices more than when it attains to some great Law, which all things obey, and by which all are bound together. Through this principle we have learned that the sun, earth, and planets, form a connected whole, and obey one law called attraction; and still more we have risen to the sublime conviction that all the heavenly bodies, countless as they may be, are linked together by mutual dependencies and beneficent influences into one system. Now this tendency to search for connection and harmonyâ€”for Unityâ€”in the infinite variety of nature, is a direct tendency to a belief in One God. For this unity of nature manifestly proves, and can only be explained by, unity of thought, design, and intelligent power; that is, it proclaims One Omnipotent, All-comprehending Creator. Look next at the Conscience; and here we see another natural tendency to religion. What particularly strikes us in this principle of our nature is that it not only enjoins the law of duty, but intimates that there is a Ruler above us, by whom this Law will be sustained and executed. Conscience speaks not as a solitary, independent guide, but as the delegate of a higher Legislator. That this is the natural suggestion of Conscience we learn from the fact that men in different ages, countries and conditions, have so generally agreed in speaking of the inward monitor as the voice of the Divinity. In approving or condemning ourselves, we do not feel as if we alone are the judges, but we have a presentiment of standing before another tribunal. Especially when we see the wrongdoer prosperous do we feel as if the injustice of fortune ought to be redressed. We demand an Almighty Patron of virtue. Retribution is the claim of our moral nature. So powerful is this tendency of Conscience to assert a righteous Deity, that we cannot escape the sense of His Presence. Often when the guilty have tried to efface the impression of a Supreme Lawgiver, the commanding truth has defied their power. The handwriting of the Divinity in the soul, though seemingly obliterated, has come out with awful distinctness in the solemn seasons of life. Thus Conscience is a prophet of religion. And in proportion as it is obeyed, and the idea of Right becomes real and living within us, the existence of the Almighty Friend of virtue is intimately felt, and with profoundest reverence. If we pass next to the Affections, we shall recognize still more clearly that our nature is formed for religion. What is the first affection awakened in the human heart? It is filial love, a grateful sense of parental kindness. And is not this the seed and prime

principle of religion? For what is religion but filial love rising to our Father in heaven? Thus the first emotion of the human heart is virtually towards God. Its first spontaneous impulse is an element of piety. Another characteristic emotion of our nature is that feeling of Approbation with which we look on disinterested benevolence. We cannot conceive of a human being quite wanting in this moral principle, whose heart would not expand at witnessing in a fellow-man philanthropy unaffected, unwearied, and diffusing happiness far and wide. Here is another germ of religion. For what is religion but sympathetic joy in the unbounded beneficence of God? What but this very affection of esteem raised to Him who is the source of all goodwill in men, and before whose glory of disinterested love all other goodness is but a shadow? I proceed to another affection of our nature, which bears strong testimony to our being born for religion. I refer to the emotion which leads us to revere what is higher than ourselves, to wonder at the incomprehensible, to admire the vast, to adore the majestic.