

# World Religions: Similarity or Difference?

"No religion is an island."

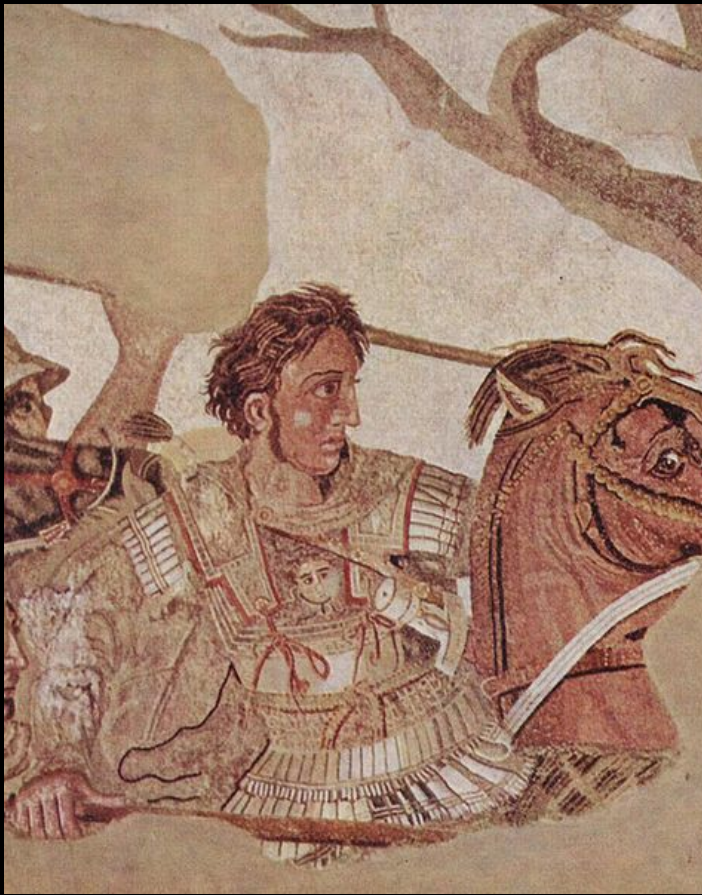
-Abraham Heschel  
Jewish Philosopher

"He who knows one, knows none."

- Max Müller, German philologist

# An Ancient Encounter

“I am conquering the World”



“I am experiencing Nothingness”



# Alexander's "world"

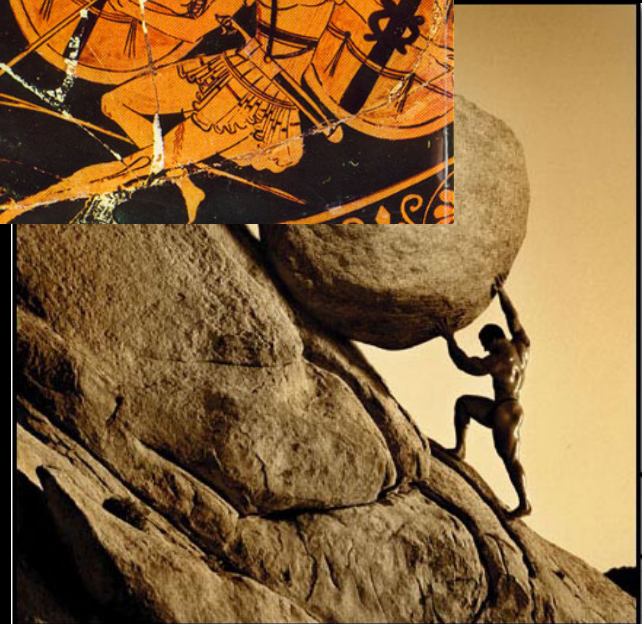
A life lived "excellently"

Achilles vs. Sisyphus

NO! to monotony,  
mediocrity,  
meaninglessness

YES! To exhilaration, being  
spectacular, winning

You only cross the river  
once.





# The Gymnosophist's "world"



Reconciliation to the infinite

Bharat, Ram and Krisna

In the canvas of infinity, we are insignificant.

Nothing lasts forever, all comes to an end, and returns.

You may cross the river again and again.

# What do the stories tell us?

- They each have heroes, an example
- They each have view of the world, a 'problem'
- They each have a view of an 'end', a 'solution' or goal
- They each have a way to live, to be, in the world

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- Religious Language
- Life & Death
- Ethics & Morality
- Pluralism & Diversity

# Same God?

"The Koran or the Zend-Avesta or the Bible is as much a sacred book as the Bhagavad-Gita....

Ahuramazda, Isvara, Allah, Jehovah are different names for one God.

- Swami Sivananda:

Belief in one God is the cornerstone of all religions.

- Mohandas Gandhi

# The “Golden Rule”

The essential message of all religions is very much the same.

- Dalai Lama

“Do not do to others what you would not like them to do to you.”

-Confucius

“That which is hateful to you, do not do to your neighbor. That is the Torah. The rest is commentary. Go and study it.”

- Rabbi Hillel, 1<sup>st</sup> c. C.E.

Scripture “teaches nothing but charity, and we must not leave an interpretation of scripture until we have found a compassionate interpretation of it.”

Augustine of Hippo



# Similarities as “family resemblance”

Allow us to  
discover bridges  
for collaboration  
and shared  
work.

- Tendencies towards belief or behavior
- Rituals
- Stories about beginning of life and death
- Techniques of ecstasy and devotion
- Organization into institutions or gathering into sacred places
- Instructions about behavior.

# Every Religion articulates:

- A Problem
- A Solution (which is also a goal)
- A Technique (for moving from problem to solution)
- An Exemplar

# Different Problems, Different Solutions: Buddhism

- A Problem
  - A Solution (which is also a goal)
  - A Technique (for moving from problem to solution)
  - An Exemplar
- Suffering
  - Nirvana
  - Noble Eightfold Path
  - *Arhats, Bodhisattas, or lamas*

# Different Problems, Different Solutions: Judaism

- A Problem
- A Solution (which is also a goal)
- A Technique (for moving from problem to solution)
- An Exemplar
- Exile
- Return to God and home
- The Law, Torah
- Abraham, Isaac, Jacob

# Different Problems, Different Solutions: Others?

- A Problem
- A Solution (which is also a goal)
- A Technique (for moving from problem to solution)
- An Exemplar
- Christianity
- Islam
- Confucianism
- Hinduism
- Daoism
- Yaruba
- Athesism



# Different Problems, Different Solutions: Islam

- A Problem
- A Solution (which is also a goal)
- A Technique (for moving from problem to solution)
- An Exemplar
- Pride
- Submission
- Five Pillars
- Muhammed

# Different Problems, Different Solutions: Christianity

- A Problem
- A Solution (which is also a goal)
- A Technique (for moving from problem to solution)
- An Exemplar
- Sin
- Salvation
- Faith and Good Works
- Saints and the Faithful

# Difference:

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island."

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Jewish Philosopher

"He who knows  
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- Max Müller, German  
philologist

Differences are  
an opportunity  
for learning  
about the self  
and the 'other.'