

# Catagories of Philisophical Thought

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# Chapter 1

## Historical materialism

**Historical materialism** is a methodological approach to the study of human **societies** and their development over time that was first articulated by **Karl Marx** (1818–1883) as the **materialist conception of history**. It is principally a theory of **history** according to which the material conditions of a society's way of producing and reproducing the means of human existence or, in Marxist terms, the union of its **productive capacity** and social **relations of production**, fundamentally determine its organization and development.

Historical materialism\* [1] looks for the causes of developments and changes in human society in the means by which humans collectively produce the necessities of life. Social classes and the relationship between them, along with the political structures and ways of thinking in society, are founded on and reflect contemporary economic activity.\* [2]

Since Marx's time, the theory has been modified and expanded by Marxist writers. It now has many Marxist and non-Marxist variants.

### 1.1 Key ideas

“In the Marxian view, human history is like a river. From any given vantage point, a river looks much the same day after day. But actually it is constantly flowing and changing, crumbling its banks, widening and deepening its channel. The water seen one day is never the same as that seen the next. Some of it is constantly being evaporated and drawn up, to return as rain. From year to year these changes may be scarcely perceptible. But one day, when the banks are thoroughly weakened and the rains long and heavy, the river floods, bursts its banks, and may take a new course. This represents the dialectical part of Marx's famous theory of **dialectical** (or historical) materialism.”

—Hubert Kay, Life Magazine, 1948\* [3]

Historical materialism springs from a fundamental underlying reality of human existence: that in order for human beings to survive and continue existence from generation to generation, it is necessary for them to produce and reproduce the material requirements of life.\* [4] Marx then

extended this premise by asserting the importance of the fact that, in order to carry out production and exchange, people have to enter into very definite social relations, most fundamentally “production relations” .

However, production does not get carried out in the abstract, or by entering into arbitrary or random relations chosen at will. **Human beings** collectively work on nature but do not do the same work; there is a **division of labor** in which people not only do different jobs, but according to Marxist theory, some people live off the fruits of others' labor by owning the **means of production**. How this is accomplished depends on the type of society. Production is carried out through very definite relations between people. And, in turn, these production relations are determined by the level and character of the **productive forces** that are present at any given time in history. For Marx, productive forces refer to the means of production such as the tools, instruments, technology, land, raw materials, and human knowledge and abilities in terms of using these means of production.

Writers who identify with historical materialism usually postulate that society has moved through a number of types or **modes of production**. That is, the character of the production relations is determined by the character of the productive forces; these could be the simple tools and instruments of early human existence, or the more developed machinery and technology of present age. The main modes of production Marx identified generally include **primitive communism** or **tribal society** (a prehistoric stage), **ancient society**, **feudalism**, and **capitalism**. In each of these social stages, people interact with nature and produce their living in different ways. Any surplus from that production is allotted in different ways. Ancient society was based on a ruling class of slave owners and a class of slaves; feudalism was based on landowners and **serfs**; and capitalism based on the capitalist class and the **working class**. The capitalist class privately owns the means of production, distribution and exchange (e.g., factories, mines, shops and banks) while the working class live by exchanging their socialized **labor** with the capitalist class for wages.

Marx identified the production relations of society (arising on the basis of given productive forces) as the economic base of society. He also explained that on the

foundation of the economic base there arise certain political institutions, laws, customs, culture, etc., and ideas, ways of thinking, morality, etc. These constituted the political/ideological superstructure of society. This superstructure not only has its origin in the economic base, but its features also ultimately correspond to the character and development of that economic base, i.e. the way people organize society is determined by the economic base and the relations that arise from its mode of production.

Historical materialism can be seen to rest on the following principles:

1. The basis of human society is how humans work on nature to produce the means of subsistence.
2. There is a division of labor into social classes (relations of production) based on property ownership where some people live from the labor of others.
3. The system of class division is dependent on the mode of production.
4. The mode of production is based on the level of the productive forces.
5. Society moves from stage to stage when the dominant class is displaced by a new emerging class, by overthrowing the “political shell” that enforces the old relations of production no longer corresponding to the new productive forces. This takes place in the superstructure of society, the political arena in the form of *revolution*, whereby the underclass “liberates” the productive forces with new relations of production, and social relations, corresponding to it.

Marx's clearest formulation of his “materialist conception of history” was in the 1859 Preface to his book *A Contribution to the Critique of Political Economy*, whose relevant passage is reproduced here:

“In the social production of their existence, men inevitably enter into definite relations, which are independent of their will, namely *relations of production* appropriate to a given stage in the development of their material forces of production. The totality of these relations of production constitutes the economic structure of society, the real foundation, on which arises a legal and political superstructure and to which correspond definite forms of *consciousness*. The mode of production of material life conditions the general process of social, political and intellectual life. It is not the consciousness of men that determines their existence, but their social existence that determines their consciousness. At a certain stage of development, the material productive forces of society come into conflict with the existing

relations of production or —this merely expresses the same thing in legal terms —with the property relations within the framework of which they have operated hitherto. From forms of development of the productive forces these relations turn into their fetters. Then begins an era of social revolution. The changes in the economic foundation lead sooner or later to the transformation of the whole immense superstructure. In studying such transformations it is always necessary to distinguish between the material transformation of the economic conditions of production, which can be determined with the precision of natural science, and the legal, political, religious, artistic or philosophic —in short, *ideological* forms in which men become conscious of this conflict and fight it out. Just as one does not judge an *individual* by what he thinks about himself, so one cannot judge such a period of transformation by its consciousness, but, on the contrary, this consciousness must be explained from the contradictions of material life, from the conflict existing between the social forces of production and the relations of production.” \* [5]

Perhaps the most influential recent defense of this passage, and of relevant Marxian and Marxist assertions, is G.A. Cohen's *Karl Marx's Theory of History: A Defence*.\* [6]

## 1.2 Key implications in the study and understanding of history

Many writers note that historical materialism represented a revolution in human thought, and a break from previous ways of understanding the underlying basis of change within various human societies. As Marx puts it, “a coherence arises in human history” \* [7] because each generation inherits the productive forces developed previously and in turn further develops them before passing them on to the next generation. Further, this coherence increasingly involves more of humanity the more the productive forces develop and expand to bind people together in production and exchange.

This understanding counters the notion that human history is simply a series of accidents, either without any underlying cause or caused by supernatural beings or forces exerting their will on society. This posits that history is made as a result of struggle between different social classes rooted in the underlying economic base.

Broadly, the importance of the study of history lies in the ability of history to explain the present. John Bellamy Foster asserts that historical materialism is important in explaining history from a scientific perspective, by fol-

lowing the scientific method, as opposed to belief-system theories like **Creationism** and **Intelligent Design**, which do not base their beliefs on verifiable facts and hypotheses. \* [8]

### 1.3 Marx's materialism

While the “historical” part of historical materialism does not cause a comprehension problem (i.e., it means the present is explained by analysing the past), the term **materialism** is more difficult. Historical materialism uses “materialism” to make two separate points, where the truth or falsehood of one point does not affect the others.

Firstly, there is metaphysical or philosophical materialism, in which matter-in-motion is considered primary and thought about matter-in-motion, or thought about abstractions, secondary.

Secondly, there is the notion that economic processes form the material base of society upon which institutions and ideas rest and from which they derive. While the economy is the base structure of society, it does not follow that everything in history is determined by the economy, just as every feature of a house is not determined by its foundations. Thus, there is the idea that in the **capitalist mode of production** the behaviour of actors in the market economy (means of production, distribution and exchange, the relations of production) plays the major role in configuring society.

### 1.4 The future

In his analysis of the movement of history, Marx predicted the breakdown of capitalism, and the establishment in time of a communist society in which class-based human conflict would be overcome. The means of production would be held in the common ownership and used for the common good. In the mention of “human liberation” one should not neglect that, in the level of production, solely the working class is the most oppressed. But either way in the prediction of the future, one shall first know of the past (i.e. the establishment of capitalism and the transitional part of feudalism).

### 1.5 Marxist beliefs about history

“Society does not consist of individuals, but expresses the sum of interrelations, the relations within which these individuals stand.”  
—Karl Marx, *Grundrisse*, 1858\* [9]

According to Marxist theorists, history develops in accordance with the following observations:

1. Social progress is driven by progress in the material, productive forces a society has at its disposal (**technology**, **labor**, **capital goods**, etc.)
2. Humans are inevitably involved in production relations (roughly speaking, economic relationships or institutions), which constitute our most decisive **social relations**.
3. Production relations progress, with a degree of inevitability, following and corresponding to the development of the **productive forces**.
4. **Relations of production** help determine the degree and types of the development of the forces of production. For example, capitalism tends to increase the rate at which the forces develop and stresses the **accumulation of capital**.
5. Both **productive forces** and production relations progress independently of mankind's strategic intentions or will.
6. The **superstructure**—the cultural and institutional features of a society, its ideological materials—is ultimately an expression of the mode of production (which combines both the forces and **relations of production**) on which the society is founded.
7. Every type of **state** is a powerful **institution** of the ruling class; the state is an instrument which one class uses to secure its rule and enforce its preferred production relations (and its **exploitation**) onto society.
8. State power is usually only transferred from one class to another by social and political upheaval.
9. When a given style of production relations no longer supports further progress in the productive forces, either further progress is strangled, or 'revolution' must occur.
10. The actual historical process is not predetermined but depends on the class struggle, especially the organization and consciousness of the working class.

### 1.6 Alienation and freedom

**Hunter-gatherer** societies were structured so that the economic forces and the political forces were one and the same. The elements of force and relation operated together, harmoniously. In the **feudal society**, the political forces of the kings and nobility had their relations with the economic forces of the villages through **serfdom**. The serfs, although not free, were tied to both forces and, thus,

not completely alienated. Capitalism, Marx argued, completely separates the economic and political forces, leaving them to have relations through a limiting **government**. He takes the state to be a sign of this separation—it exists to manage the massive conflicts of interest which arise between classes in all those societies based on property relations.

## 1.7 History

Marx's attachment to materialism arose from his doctoral research on the philosophy of **Epicurus**,<sup>[10]</sup> as well as his reading of **Adam Smith** and other writers in classical **political economy**. Historical materialism builds upon the idea that became current in philosophy from the sixteenth to eighteenth centuries that the development of human society has moved through a series of stages, from **hunting and gathering**, through **pastoralism** and cultivation, to commercial society.<sup>[11]</sup>

**Friedrich Engels** wrote: "I use 'historical materialism' to designate the view of the course of history, which seeks the ultimate causes and the great moving power of all important historic events in the economic development of society, in the changes in the modes of production and exchange, with the consequent division of society into distinct classes and the struggles of these classes."<sup>[12]</sup>

## 1.8 Nations as a product of capitalism

According to historical materialism, nations arose at the time of the appearance of capitalism on the basis of community of economic life, territory, language, certain features of psychology, traditions of everyday life and culture. In the **Manifesto of the Communist Party** Marx and Engels explained that the coming into existence of nations was the result of class struggle, specifically of the capitalist class's attempts to overthrow the institutions of the former ruling class. Prior to capitalism, nations did not exist.<sup>[13]</sup> The Marxist theory of the national question was developed further and concretised by **Lenin**.<sup>[14]</sup> According to him, there are two opposite tendencies in the development of nations under capitalism. One of them is expressed in the activation of national life and national movements against the oppressors. The other is expressed in the expansion of links among nations, the breaking down of barriers between them, the establishment of a unified economy and of a world market.<sup>[15]</sup>

See also: **National personal autonomy**

## 1.9 Warnings against misuse

See also: **Economic determinism**

"One has to 'leave philosophy aside' (Wigand, p. 187, cf. Hess, *Die letzten Philosophen*, p. 8), one has to leap out of it and devote oneself like an ordinary man to the study of actuality, for which there exists also an enormous amount of literary material, unknown, of course, to the philosophers.... Philosophy and the study of the actual world have the same relation to one another as masturbation and sexual love." (Karl Marx and Friedrich Engels, *The German Ideology*, International Publishers, ed. Chris Arthur, p. 103)

Marx himself took care to indicate that he was only proposing a guideline to historical research (*Leitfaden* or *Auffassung*), and was not providing any substantive "theory of history" or "grand philosophy of history", let alone a "master-key to history". Numerous times, he and Engels expressed irritation with dilettante academics who sought to knock up their skimpy historical knowledge as quickly as possible into some grand theoretical system that would explain "everything" about history. To their great annoyance, the materialist outlook was used as an excuse for not studying history.

In the 1872 Preface to the French edition of *Das Kapital* Vol. 1, Marx also emphasised that "There is no royal road to science, and only those who do not dread the fatiguing climb of its steep paths have a chance of gaining its luminous summits". Reaching a scientific understanding was hard work. Conscientious, painstaking research was required, instead of philosophical speculation and unwarranted, sweeping generalizations.

But having abandoned abstract philosophical speculation in his youth, Marx himself showed great reluctance during the rest of his life about offering any generalities or universal truths about human existence or human history. The first explicit and systematic summary of the materialist interpretation of history published, *Anti-Dühring*, was written by Friedrich Engels.

One of the aims of Engels's polemic *Herr Eugen Dühring's Revolution in Science* (written with Marx's approval) was to ridicule the easy "world schematism" of philosophers, who invented the latest wisdom from behind their writing desks. Towards the end of his life, in 1877, Marx wrote a letter to the editor of the Russian paper *Otetchestvennyye Zapisky*, which significantly contained the following disclaimer:

"[...] If Russia is tending to become a capitalist nation after the example of the Western European countries, and during the last years



she has been taking a lot of trouble in this direction—she will not succeed without having first transformed a good part of her peasants into proletarians; and after that, once taken to the bosom of the capitalist regime, she will experience its pitiless laws like other profane peoples. That is all. But that is not enough for my critic. He feels himself obliged to metamorphose my historical sketch of the genesis of capitalism in Western Europe into an historico-philosophic theory of the *marche generale* imposed by fate upon every people, whatever the historic circumstances in which it finds itself, in order that it may ultimately arrive at the form of economy which will ensure, together with the greatest expansion of the productive powers of social labor, the most complete development of man. But I beg his pardon. (He is both honouring and shaming me too much.)"

Marx goes on to illustrate how the same factors can in different historical contexts produce very different results, so that quick and easy generalizations are not really possible. To indicate how seriously Marx took research, it is interesting to note that when he died, his estate contained several cubic metres of Russian statistical publications (it was, as the old Marx observed, in Russia that his ideas gained most influence).

But what is true is that insofar as Marx and Engels regarded historical processes as *law*-governed processes, the possible future directions of historical development were to a great extent *limited* and *conditioned* by what happened before. Retrospectively, historical processes could be understood to have happened by *necessity* in certain ways and not others, and to some extent at least, the most likely variants of the future could be specified on the basis of careful study of the known facts.

Towards the end of his life, Engels commented several times about the abuse of historical materialism.

In a letter to Conrad Schmidt dated August 5, 1890, he stated:

"And if this man (i.e., Paul Barth) has not yet discovered that while the material mode of existence is the *primum agens* this does not preclude the ideological spheres from reacting upon it in their turn, though with a secondary effect, he cannot possibly have understood the subject he is writing about. (...) The materialist conception of history has a lot of [dangerous friends] nowadays, to whom it serves as an excuse for not studying history. Just as Marx used to say, commenting on the French "Marxists" of the late 70s: "All I know is that I am not a Marxist." (...) In general, the word "materialistic" serves many of the younger writers in Germany as a mere phrase with which anything

and everything is labeled without further study, that is, they stick on this label and then consider the question disposed of. But our conception of history is above all a guide to study, not a lever for construction after the manner of the Hegelian. All history must be studied afresh, the conditions of existence of the different formations of society must be examined individually before the attempt is made to deduce them from the political, civil law, aesthetic, philosophical, religious, etc., views corresponding to them. Up to now but little has been done here because only a few people have got down to it seriously. In this field we can utilize heaps of help, it is immensely big, anyone who will work seriously can achieve much and distinguish himself. But instead of this too many of the younger Germans simply make use of the phrase historical materialism (and everything can be turned into a phrase) only in order to get their own relatively scanty historical knowledge—for economic history is still in its swaddling clothes!—constructed into a neat system as quickly as possible, and they then deem themselves something very tremendous. And after that a Barth can come along and attack the thing itself, which in his circle has indeed been degraded to a mere phrase." \* [16]

Finally, in a letter to Franz Mehring dated 14 July 1893, Engels stated:

"...there is only one other point lacking, which, however, Marx and I always failed to stress enough in our writings and in regard to which we are all equally guilty. That is to say, we all laid, and were bound to lay, the main emphasis, in the first place, on the derivation of political, juridical and other ideological notions, and of actions arising through the medium of these notions, from basic economic facts. But in so doing we neglected the formal side—the ways and means by which these notions, etc., come about—for the sake of the content. This has given our adversaries a welcome opportunity for misunderstandings, of which Paul Barth is a striking example." \* [17]

## 1.10 In Marxist thought

In 1880, about three years before Marx died, Friedrich Engels indicated that he accepted the usage of the term "historical materialism". Recalling the early days of the new interpretation of history, he stated:

"We, at that time, were all materialists, or, at least, very advanced free-thinkers, and to us

it appeared inconceivable that almost all educated people in England should believe in all sorts of impossible miracles, and that even geologists like Buckland and Mantell should contort the facts of their science so as not to clash too much with the myths of the book of Genesis; while, in order to find people who dared to use their own intellectual faculties with regard to religious matters, you had to go amongst the uneducated, the “great unwashed”, as they were then called, the working people, especially the Owenite Socialists”.

(Preface to the English edition of his pamphlet *Socialism: Utopian and Scientific*)\*[18]

In a foreword to his essay *Ludwig Feuerbach and the End of Classical German Philosophy* (1886), three years after Marx's death, Engels claimed confidently that “In the meantime, the Marxist world outlook has found representatives far beyond the boundaries of Germany and Europe and in all the literary languages of the world.”\*[19]

In his old age, Engels speculated about a new cosmology or ontology which would show the principles of dialectics to be universal features of reality. He also drafted an article on *The Part Played by Labour in the Transition from Ape to Man*, apparently a theory of anthropogenesis which would integrate the insights of Marx and Charles Darwin.\*[20] (This is discussed by Charles Woolfson in *The Labour Theory of Culture: a Re-examination of Engels Theory of Human Origins*).

At the very least, Marxism had now been born, and “historical materialism” had become a distinct philosophical doctrine, subsequently elaborated and systematised by intellectuals like Eduard Bernstein, Karl Kautsky, Georgi Plekhanov and Nikolai Bukharin. Even so, up to the 1930s many of Marx's earlier works were still unknown, and in reality most self-styled Marxists had not read beyond Capital Vol. 1. Isaac Deutscher provides an anecdote about the knowledge of Marx in that era:

“*Capital* is a tough nut to crack, opined Ignacy Daszyński, one of the best known socialist “people's tribunes” around the turn of the 20th century, but anyhow he had not read it. But, he said, Karl Kautsky had read it, and written a popular summary of the first volume. He hadn't read this either, but Kazimierz Kelles-Krauz, the party theoretician, had read Kautsky's pamphlet and summarised it. He also had not read Kelles-Krauz's text, but the financial expert of the party, Hermann Diamand, had read it and had told him, i.e. Daszynski, everything about it”.\*[21]

After Vladimir Lenin's death in 1924, Marxism was transformed into Marxism-Leninism and from there to Maoism or Marxism-Leninism-Mao Zedong Thought in China which some regard as the “true doctrine” and others as a “state religion”.

In the early years of the 20th century, historical materialism was often treated by socialist writers as interchangeable with **dialectical materialism**, a formulation never used by Friedrich Engels however. According to many Marxists influenced by Soviet Marxism, historical materialism is a specifically **sociological** method, while dialectical materialism refers to a more general, abstract, **philosophy**. The Soviet orthodox Marxist tradition, influential for half a century, based itself on Joseph Stalin's pamphlet *Dialectical and Historical Materialism* and on textbooks issued by the “Institute of Marxism-Leninism of the Central Committee of the Communist Party of the Soviet Union”.

## 1.11 Recent versions

Several scholars have argued that historical materialism ought to be revised in the light of modern scientific knowledge. Jürgen Habermas believes historical materialism “needs revision in many respects”, especially because it has ignored the significance of **communicative action**.

Göran Therborn has argued that the method of historical materialism should be applied to historical materialism as intellectual tradition, and to the history of Marxism itself.

In the early 1980s, Paul Hirst and Barry Hindess elaborated a **structural Marxism** interpretation of historical materialism.

**Regulation theory**, especially in the work of Michel Aglietta draws extensively on historical materialism.

**Spiral dynamics** shows similarities to historical materialism.

## 1.12 Criticisms

Philosopher of science Karl Popper, in his *Conjectures and Refutations*, critiqued such claims of the explanatory power or valid application of historical materialism by arguing that it could explain or explain away any fact brought before it, making it **unfalsifiable**.

In his 1940 essay *Theses on the Philosophy of History*, scholar Walter Benjamin compares historical materialism to **The Turk**, an 18th-century device which was promoted as a mechanized automaton which could defeat skilled chess players but actually concealed a human who controlled the machine. Benjamin suggested that, despite Marx's claims to scientific objectivity, historical materialism was actually quasi-religious. Like the Turk, wrote Benjamin, “[t]he puppet called ‘historical materialism’ is always supposed to win. It can do this with no further ado against any opponent, so long as it employs the services of **theology**, which as everyone knows is small and ugly and must be kept out of sight.” Benjamin's friend

and colleague Gershom Scholem would argue that Benjamin's critique of historical materialism was so definitive that, as Mark Lilla would write, "nothing remains of historical materialism [...] but the term itself." [22] It is important to note, however, that Benjamin was arguing against a mechanistic form of historical materialist explanation then prevalent in Stalin's Russia, and was himself a committed, if unorthodox, Marxist. Later in "On the Concept of History," he writes: "Class struggle, which for a historian schooled in Marx is always in evidence, is a fight for the crude and material things without which no refined and spiritual things could exist. [...] There is no document of culture which is not at the same time a document of barbarism. And just as such a document is never free of barbarism, so barbarism taints the manner in which it was transmitted from one hand to another. The historical materialist therefore dissociates himself from this process of transmission as far as possible. He regards it as his task to brush history against the grain." [23]

Underlying the dispute among historians are the different assumptions made about the definition or concept of "history" and "historiography". Different historians take a different view of what it is all about, and what the possibilities of historical and social scientific knowledge are.

## 1.13 See also

- Economic determinism
- *Fundamentals of Marxism–Leninism*
- Marx's theory of history
- Marxist historiography
- Orthodox Marxism
- Parametric determinism
- *Historical Materialism*
- Theory of historical trajectory

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- Z.A. Jordan, The Origins of Dialectical Materialism (good survey)\*[1]
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- William H. Shaw, *Marx's Theory of History* provides a short survey
- Joseph Stalin, *Dialectical and Historical Materialism*. (classic statement of Stalinist doctrine)
- Wal Suchting, *Marx: An Introduction* includes a good short introduction
- Göran Therborn, *Science, Class and Society* (critical survey of the relationship between sociology and historical materialism)
- E.P. Thompson, *The Poverty of Theory*. (polemic which ridicules theorists of history who do not actually study history)
- Gustav A. Wetter, *Dialectical Materialism: a Historical and Systematic Survey of Philosophy in the Soviet Union*. (alternative survey)
- Johan Witt-Hansen, *Historical Materialism: The Method, The Theories*. (sees historical materialism as a methodology, and *Das Kapital* as an application of the method)
- Allen W. Wood, *Karl Marx* (Arguments of the Philosophers series), Routledge 2004 delves into misinterpretations of Marx including the substitution of “Historical materialism” by Lenin

## 1.16 External links

- Extract from the Communist Manifesto
- Preface to *A Contribution to the Critique of Political Economy*
- Materialist Conception of History
- *The materialist conception of history*
- Bibliography of modern commentaries on Marx's thought

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## Chapter 2

# Dialectical materialism

**Dialectical materialism** (sometimes abbreviated **diamat**) is a philosophy of science and nature, based on the writings of Karl Marx and Friedrich Engels, and developed largely in Russia and the Soviet Union.\*[1]\*[2] Inspired by dialectic and materialist philosophical traditions, it accepts evolution of the natural world and the emergence of new qualities of being at new stages of evolution. As Z. A. Jordan notes, “Engels made constant use of the metaphysical insight that the higher level of existence emerges from and has its roots in the lower; that the higher level constitutes a new order of being with its irreducible laws; and that this process of evolutionary advance is governed by laws of development which reflect basic properties of 'matter in motion as a whole'.”\*[3]

The formulation of the Soviet version of dialectical and historical materialism in the 1930s by Joseph Stalin and his associates (such as in Stalin's book *Dialectical and Historical Materialism*) became the “official” Soviet interpretation of Marxism. It was codified and popularized in text books which were required reading in the Soviet Union as well as some Eastern European countries. It was exported to China as the “official” interpretation of Marxism but has since been widely rejected in China in the Soviet formulation.

A Soviet philosophical encyclopedia of the 1960s speaks of the evolution of complexity in nature as follows: “This whole series of forms (mechanical, physical, chemical, biological and social) is distributed according to complexity from lower to higher. This seriation expresses their mutual bonds in terms of structure and in terms of history. The general laws of the lower forms of the motion of matter keep their validity for all the higher forms but they are subject to the higher laws and do not have a prominent role. They change their activity because of changed circumstances. Laws can be general or specific, depending on their range of applicability. The specific laws fall under the special sciences and the general laws are the province of diamat.”\*[4] Each level of matter exists as a type of organization, in which the elements that make up a whole, or system, are marked by a specific type of interconnection.

## 2.1 The term

The term *dialectical materialism* was coined in 1887 by Joseph Dietzgen, a socialist tanner who corresponded with Marx, during and after the failed 1848 German Revolution. As a philosopher, Dietzgen had constructed the theory of dialectical materialism independently of Marx and Engels.\*[5] Casual mention of the term *dialectical materialism* is also found in the biography *Frederick Engels*, by philosopher Karl Kautsky,\*[6] written in the same year. Marx himself had talked about the “materialist conception of history”, which was later referred to as “historical materialism” by Engels. Engels further exposed the “materialist dialectic” in his *Dialectics of Nature* in 1883. The term *dialectical materialism* was never used either by Marx or Engels, however.\*[7] Georgi Plekhanov, the father of Russian Marxism, later introduced the term *dialectical materialism* to Marxist literature.\*[8] Joseph Stalin further delineated and defined dialectical and historical materialism as the world outlook of Marxism-Leninism, and as a method to study society and its history.\*[9]

## 2.2 Historical background

Marx and Engels each began their adulthood as Young Hegelians, one of several groups of intellectuals inspired by the philosopher Georg Wilhelm Friedrich Hegel.\*[10]\*[11] Marx's doctoral thesis, *The Difference Between the Democritean and Epicurean Philosophy of Nature*, was concerned with the atomism of Epicurus and Democritus, which is considered the foundation of materialist philosophy. Marx was also familiar with Lucretius's theory of *clinamen*. Marx and Engels both concluded that Hegelian philosophy, at least as interpreted by their former colleagues, was too abstract and was being misapplied in attempts to explain the social injustice in recently industrializing countries such as Germany, France, and the United Kingdom, which was a growing concern in the early 1840s.\*[11]

In contrast to the conventional Hegelian dialectic of the day, which emphasized the idealist observation that human experience is dependent on the mind's perceptions,

Marx developed **Marxist dialectics**, which emphasized the **materialist** view that the world of the concrete shapes **socioeconomic** interactions and that those in turn determine **sociopolitical** reality.\* [10] Whereas some Hegelians blamed religious alienation (estrangement from the traditional comforts of religion) for societal ills, Marx and Engels concluded that alienation from economic and political **autonomy**, coupled with **exploitation** and **poverty**, was the real culprit.\* [11] In keeping with dialectical ideas, Marx and Engels thus created an alternative theory, not only of why the world is the way it is, but also of which actions people should take to make it the way it ought to be. In *Theses on Feuerbach* (1845), Marx wrote, “The philosophers have only *interpreted* the world, in various ways. The point, however, is to *change* it.”\* [10] Dialectical materialism is thus closely related to Marx's and Engels's **historical materialism** (and has sometimes been viewed as **synonymous** with it). Marx rejected the language of “thesis, antithesis, synthesis”.\* [7]

Dialectical materialism is an aspect of the broader subject of **materialism**, which asserts the primacy of the material world: in short, matter precedes thought. Materialism is a realist philosophy of science,\* [12] which holds that the world is material; that all phenomena in the universe consist of “matter in motion,” wherein all things are interdependent and interconnected and develop according to **natural law**; that the world exists outside us and independently of our perception of it; that thought is a reflection of the material world in the brain, and that the world is *in principle* knowable. Marx criticized classical materialism as another idealist philosophy—idealist because of its transhistorical understanding of material contexts. The Young Hegelian **Ludwig Feuerbach** had rejected Hegel's idealistic philosophy and advocated materialism.\* [13] Despite being strongly influenced by Feuerbach,\* [13] Marx rejected Feuerbach's version of materialism as inconsistent.\* [14] The writings of Engels, especially *Anti-Dühring* (1878) and *Dialectics of Nature* (1875–82), were the source of the main doctrines of dialectical materialism.\* [7]

## 2.3 Marx's dialectics

The concept of dialectical materialism emerges from statements by Marx in the preface to his magnum opus, *Capital*. There Marx says he intends to use Hegelian dialectics but in revised form. He defends Hegel against those who view him as a “dead dog” and then says, “I openly avowed myself as the pupil of that mighty thinker [Hegel].”\* [15] Marx credits Hegel with “being the first to present [dialectic's] form of working in a comprehensive and conscious manner”. But he then criticizes Hegel for turning dialectics upside down: “With him it is standing on its head. It must be turned right side up again, if you would discover the rational kernel within the mystical shell.”\* [16]

Marx's criticism of Hegel asserts that Hegel's dialectics go astray by dealing with ideas, with the human mind. Hegel's dialectic, Marx says, inappropriately concerns “the process of the human brain”; it focuses on ideas. Hegel's thought is in fact sometimes called **dialectical idealism**. Marx believed that dialectics should deal not with the mental world of ideas but with “the material world”, the world of production and other economic activity.\* [16]

For Marx, human history cannot be fitted into any neat *a priori* schema. He explicitly rejects the idea of Hegel's followers that history can be understood as “a person apart, a metaphysical subject of which real human individuals are but the bearers”.\* [17] To interpret history as though previous social formations have somehow been aiming themselves toward the present state of affairs is “to misunderstand the historical movement by which the successive generations transformed the results acquired by the generations that preceded them”.\* [18] Marx's rejection of this sort of **teleology** was one reason for his enthusiastic (though not entirely uncritical) reception of Darwin's theory of natural selection.\* [19]

For Marx, dialectics is not a formula for generating predetermined outcomes, but is a method for the empirical study of social processes in terms of interrelations, development, and transformation. In his introduction to the Penguin edition of Marx's *Capital*, **Ernest Mandel** writes, “When the dialectical method is applied to the study of economic problems, economic phenomena are not viewed separately from each other, by bits and pieces, but in their inner connection as an integrated totality, structured around, and by, a basic predominant mode of production.”\* [20]

Marx's own writings are almost exclusively concerned with understanding human history in terms of systemic processes, based on **modes of production** (broadly speaking, the ways in which societies are organized to employ their technological powers to interact with their material surroundings). This is called **historical materialism**. More narrowly, within the framework of this general theory of history, most of Marx's writing is devoted to an analysis of the specific structure and development of the capitalist economy.

For his part, Engels applies a “dialectical” approach to the natural world in general, arguing that contemporary science is increasingly recognizing the necessity of viewing natural processes in terms of interconnectedness, development, and transformation. Some scholars have doubted that Engels's “dialectics of nature” is a legitimate extension of Marx's approach to social processes.\* [21]\* [22]\* [23]\* [24] Other scholars have argued that despite Marx's insistence that humans are natural beings in an evolving, mutual relationship with the rest of nature, Marx's own writings pay inadequate attention to the ways in which human agency is constrained by such factors as biology, geography, and ecology.\* [25]\* [26]



## 2.4 Engels's dialectics

Engels postulated three laws of dialectics from his reading of Hegel's *Science of Logic*.<sup>\*</sup>[27] Engels elucidated these laws as the **materialist dialectic** in his work *Dialectics of Nature*:

1. The law of the unity and conflict of opposites
2. The law of the passage of quantitative changes into qualitative changes
3. The law of the negation of the negation

The first law, which originates with the ancient **Ionian** philosopher **Heraclitus**,<sup>\*</sup>[28] was seen by both Hegel and **Vladimir Lenin** as the central feature of a dialectical understanding of things:

It is in this dialectic as it is here understood, that is, in the grasping of oppositions in their unity, or of the positive in the negative, that speculative thought consists. It is the most important aspect of dialectic.

—Hegel, *Science of Logic*, § 69, (p 56 in the Miller edition)

The splitting of a single whole and the cognition of its contradictory parts is the essence (one of the “essentials”, one of the principal, if not the principal, characteristics or features) of dialectics. That is precisely how Hegel, too, puts the matter.

—Lenin's Collected Works VOLUME 38, p359: On the question of dialectics.

The second law Hegel took from Ancient Greek philosophers, notably the **paradox of the heap**, and explanation by Aristotle,<sup>\*</sup>[29] and it is equated with what scientists call **phase transitions**. It may be traced to the ancient Ionian philosophers, particularly **Anaximenes**<sup>\*</sup>[30] from whom Aristotle, Hegel, and Engels inherited the concept. For all these authors, one of the main illustrations is the **phase transitions** of water. There has also been an effort to apply this mechanism to social phenomena, whereby population increases result in changes in social structure. The law of the passage of quantitative changes into qualitative changes can also be applied to the process of social change and class conflict.<sup>\*</sup>[31]

The third law, “negation of the negation”, originated with Hegel. Although Hegel coined the term “negation of the negation”, it gained its fame from Marx's using it in *Capital*. There Marx wrote this: “The [death] knell of capitalist private property sounds. The expropriators

[capitalists] are expropriated. The capitalist mode of appropriation, the result of the capitalist mode of production, produces capitalist private property. This is the first negation [antithesis] of individual private property. [The “first negation”, or antithesis, negates the thesis, which in this instance is feudalism, the economic system that preceded capitalism.] ... But capitalist production begets, with the inexorability of a law of Nature, its own negation. It [final communism, the synthesis] is the negation of [the] negation.”<sup>\*</sup>[32]

In drawing up these laws, Engels presupposes a holistic approach outlined above and in Lenin's three elements of dialectic below, and emphasizes elsewhere that all things are in motion.<sup>\*</sup>[33] The discovery that heat was actually the movement of atoms or molecules was the very latest science of the period in which Engels was writing.

Z. A. Jordan notes, “Engels made constant use of the metaphysical insight that the higher level of existence emerges from and has its roots in the lower; that the higher level constitutes a new order of being with its irreducible laws; and that this process of evolutionary advance is governed by laws of development which reflect basic properties of 'matter in motion as a whole'.”<sup>\*</sup>[3]

## 2.5 Lenin's contributions

After reading Hegel's *Science of Logic* in 1914, Lenin made some brief notes outlining three “elements” of logic.<sup>\*</sup>[34] They are:

1. The determination of the concept out of itself [the thing itself must be considered in its relations and in its development];
2. The contradictory nature of the thing itself (the other of itself), the contradictory forces and tendencies in each phenomenon;
3. The union of analysis and synthesis.

Lenin develops these in a further series of notes, and appears to argue that “the transition of quantity into quality and vice versa” is an example of the unity and opposition of opposites expressed tentatively as “not only the unity of opposites, but the transitions of every determination, quality, feature, side, property into every other [into its opposite?].”

Also, in his essay “On the Question of Dialectics”, Lenin stated that “Development is the “struggle” of opposites.” He stated that “The unity (coincidence, identity, equal action) of opposites is conditional, temporary, transitory, relative. The struggle of mutually exclusive opposites is absolute, just as development and motion are absolute.”<sup>\*</sup>[35]

In *Materialism and Empiriocriticism* (1908), Lenin explained **dialectical materialism** as three axes: (i) the

materialist inversion of Hegelian dialectics, (ii) the **historicity** of ethical principles ordered to **class struggle**, and (iii) the convergence of "laws of evolution" in physics (Helmholtz), biology (Darwin), and in **political economy** (Marx). Hence, Lenin was philosophically positioned between historicist Marxism (Labriola) and **determinist** Marxism—a political position close to "social Darwinism" (Kautsky). Moreover, late century discoveries in physics (x-rays, **electrons**), and the beginning of **quantum mechanics**, philosophically challenged previous conceptions of **matter** and **materialism**, thus Matter seemed to be disappearing. Lenin disagreed:

'Matter disappears' means that the limit within which we have hitherto known matter disappears, and that our knowledge is penetrating deeper; properties of matter are disappearing that formerly seemed absolute, immutable, and primary, and which are now revealed to be relative and characteristic only of certain states of matter. For the *sole* 'property' of matter, with whose recognition philosophical materialism is bound up, is the property of *being an objective reality*, of existing outside of the mind.

Lenin was developing the work of Engels, who said that "with each epoch-making discovery, even in the sphere of **natural science**, **materialism** has to change its form." \* [36] One of Lenin's challenges was distancing materialism, as a viable philosophical outlook, from the "vulgar materialism" expressed in the statement "the brain secretes thought in the same way as the liver secretes bile" (attributed to 18th-century physician **Pierre Jean Georges Cabanis**, 1757–1808); "metaphysical materialism" (matter composed of immutable particles); and 19th-century "mechanical materialism" (matter as random molecules interacting per the laws of mechanics). The philosophic solution that Lenin (and Engels) proposed was "dialectical materialism", wherein matter is defined as **objective reality**, theoretically consistent with (new) developments occurred in the sciences.

Lenin reassessed **Feuerbach's** philosophy and concluded that it is in line with dialectical materialism.\* [14]

## 2.6 Lukács's contributions

György Lukács, minister of Culture in the brief Béla Kun government of the Hungarian Soviet Republic (1919), published *History and Class Consciousness* (1923), in which he defined **dialectical materialism** as the knowledge of society as a whole, knowledge which, in itself, was immediately the **class consciousness** of the proletariat. In the first chapter "What is Orthodox Marxism?", Lukács defined **orthodoxy** as fidelity to the "Marxist method", not fidelity to "dogmas":

Orthodox Marxism, therefore, does not imply the uncritical acceptance of the results of Marx's investigations. It is not the "belief" in this or that thesis, nor the **exegesis** of a "sacred" book. On the contrary, orthodoxy refers exclusively to method. It is the scientific conviction that dialectical materialism is the road to truth, and that its methods can be developed, expanded, and deepened, only along the lines laid down by its founders. (§1)

In his later works and actions, Lukács became a leader of **Democratic Marxism**. In the 1960s his associates, which became known as the **Budapest School**. He and his associates became sharply critical of the formulation of dialectical materialism in the Soviet Union that was exported to those countries under its control. He modified many of his formulations in his 1923 works and went on to develop a Marxist ontology and played an active role in democratic movements in Hungary in 1956 and the 1960s.

Lukács philosophical criticism of **Marxist revisionism** proposed an intellectual return to Marxist method. As did **Louis Althusser**, who later defined Marxism and **psychoanalysis** as "conflictual sciences";\* [37] that political factions and revisionism are inherent to **Marxist theory** and political praxis, because dialectical materialism is the philosophic product of class struggle:

For this reason, the task of orthodox Marxism, its victory over Revisionism and **utopianism** can never mean the defeat, once and for all, of false tendencies. It is an ever-renewed struggle against the insidious effects of bourgeois ideology on the thought of the proletariat. Marxist orthodoxy is no guardian of traditions, it is the eternally vigilant prophet proclaiming the relation between the tasks of the immediate present and the totality of the historical process. (§5)

Moreover, "the premise of dialectical materialism is, we recall: 'It is not men's consciousness that determines their existence, but, on the contrary, their social existence that determines their consciousness'. ... Only when the core of existence stands revealed as a social process can existence be seen as the product, albeit the hitherto unconscious product, of human activity". (§5) Philosophically aligned with Marx is the criticism of the **individualist**, **bourgeois** philosophy of the **subject**, which is founded upon the voluntary and **conscious subject**. Against said ideology is the primacy of social relations. Existence — and thus the world — is the product of human activity; but this can be seen only by accepting the primacy of social process on individual consciousness. This type of consciousness is an effect of ideological mystification.

Yet, at the 5th Congress of the **Communist International** (July 1924), **Grigory Zinoviev** formally denounced

Lukács's heterodox definition of **orthodox Marxism** as exclusively derived from fidelity to the “Marxist method”, and not to Communist party dogmas; and denounced the Marxism developments of the German theorist **Karl Korsch**.

## 2.7 Stalin's contributions

In the 1930s **Joseph Stalin** and his associates formulated a version of dialectical and **historical materialism** that became the “official” Soviet interpretation of Marxism. It was codified in Stalin's work, *Dialectical and Historical Materialism* (1938), and popularized in text books used for **compulsory education** within the Soviet Union and throughout the **Eastern Bloc**. It was exported to **China** as the “official” interpretation of Marxism but has since then been widely rejected in China in its Soviet formulation.

## 2.8 Mao's contributions

In *On Contradiction* (1937), Mao outlined a version of dialectical materialism that subsumed two of Engels's three principal laws of dialectics, “the transformation of quantity into quality” and “the negation of the negation” as sub-laws (and not principal laws of their own) of the first law, “the unity and interpenetration of opposites”.

## 2.9 As a heuristic in biology and elsewhere

Historian of science **Loren Graham** has detailed at length the role played by dialectical materialism in the Soviet Union in disciplines as diverse as biology, psychology, chemistry, cybernetics, quantum mechanics, and cosmology. He has concluded that, despite the **Lysenko** period in genetics and constraints on free inquiry imposed by political authorities, dialectical materialism had a positive influence on the work of many Soviet scientists.\*[38]

Some evolutionary biologists, such as **Richard Lewontin** and the late **Stephen Jay Gould**, have tried to employ dialectical materialism in their approach. They view dialectics as playing a precautionary heuristic role in their work. From Lewontin's perspective, we get this idea:

Dialectical materialism is not, and never has been, a programmatic method for solving particular physical problems. Rather, a dialectical analysis provides an overview and a set of warning signs against particular forms of dogmatism and narrowness of thought. It tells us, “Remember that history may leave an important trace. Remember that being and becoming

are dual aspects of nature. Remember that conditions change and that the conditions necessary to the initiation of some process may be destroyed by the process itself. Remember to pay attention to real objects in time and space and not lose them in utterly idealized abstractions. Remember that qualitative effects of context and interaction may be lost when phenomena are isolated”. And above all else, “Remember that all the other caveats are only reminders and warning signs whose application to different circumstances of the real world is contingent.”\*[39]

Gould shared similar views regarding a heuristic role for dialectical materialism. He wrote that “dialectical thinking should be taken more seriously by Western scholars, not discarded because some nations of the second world have constructed a cardboard version as an official political doctrine”.\*[40] Furthermore,

when presented as guidelines for a philosophy of change, not as dogmatic precepts true by fiat, the three classical laws of dialectics embody a holistic vision that views change as interaction among components of complete systems, and sees the components themselves not as a priori entities, but as both products and inputs to the system. Thus, the law of “interpenetrating opposites” records the inextricable interdependence of components: the “transformation of quantity to quality” defends a systems-based view of change that translates incremental inputs into alterations of state; and the “negation of negation” describes the direction given to history because complex systems cannot revert exactly to previous states.\*[41]

This heuristic was also applied to the theory of **punctuated equilibrium** proposed by **Niles Eldredge** and Gould. They wrote that “history, as Hegel said, moves upward in a spiral of negations”, and that “punctuated equilibria is a model for discontinuous tempos of change (in) the process of speciation and the deployment of species in geological time.”\*[42] They noted that “the law of transformation of quantity into quality”, “holds that a new quality emerges in a leap as the slow accumulation of quantitative changes, long resisted by a stable system, finally forces it rapidly from one state into another”, a phenomenon described in some disciplines as a **paradigm shift**. Apart from the commonly cited example of water turning to steam with increased temperature, Gould and Eldredge noted another analogy in **information theory**, “with its jargon of equilibrium, steady state, and homeostasis maintained by **negative feedback**”, and “extremely rapid transitions that occur with **positive feedback**”.\*[43]

Lewontin, Gould and Eldredge were thus more interested in dialectical materialism as a heuristic, than a dogmatic

form of 'truth' or a statement of their politics. Nevertheless, they found a readiness for critics to “seize upon” key statements\*[44] and portray punctuated equilibrium, and exercises associated with it, such as public exhibitions, as a “Marxist plot” .\*[45]

## 2.10 Philosophical evaluations

Some critics argue against dialectical materialism on account of its adherence to a purely materialist worldview, while others have objections to the dialectic method it employs. There are critics, such as the Marxist Alain Badiou, who dispute the way the concept is interpreted.\*[46] Joseph Needham, an influential historian of science and a Christian who nonetheless was an adherent of dialectical materialism, suggested that a more appropriate term might be “dialectical organicism” .\*[47] Leszek Kołakowski, writing in *Main Currents of Marxism* (1976), argued that dialectical materialism consists partly of “truths with no specific Marxist content”, partly of “philosophical dogmas”, partly of nonsense, and partly of statements that—depending on how they are interpreted—could be any of these things.\*[48] Max Eastman argued that dialectical materialism lacks a psychological basis.\*[49]

Philosopher Allen Wood argued that, in its form as an official Soviet philosophy, dialectical materialism was doomed to be superficial because “creativity or critical thinking” were impossible in an authoritarian environment. Nevertheless, he considered the basic aims and principles of dialectical materialism to be in harmony with rational scientific thought.\*[7]

## 2.11 See also

## 2.12 Further reading

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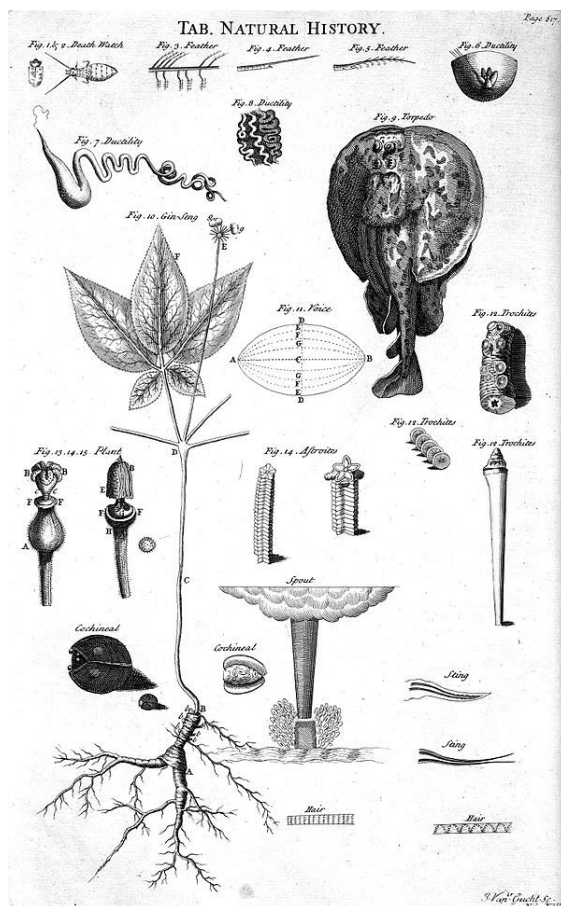
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- [29] "The sudden conversion into a change of quality of a change which was apparently merely quantitative had already attracted the attention of the ancients who illustrated in popular examples the contradiction arising from ignorance of this fact; they are familiar under the names of 'the bald' and 'the heap'. These elenchi are, according to Aristotle's explanation, ways in which one is compelled to say the opposite of what one had previously asserted..." <https://www.marxists.org/reference/archive/hegel/works/hl/hl333.htm#0719>. Hegel, *Science of Logic*, § 718ff, (p 335 in the Miller edition. See also pp. 368–70.)
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## Natural history

For other uses, see **Natural history** (disambiguation).  
 “Naturalist” redirects here. For other uses, see **Naturalist** (disambiguation).



*Tables of natural history, from Ephraim Chambers's 1728 Cyclopaedia*

**Natural history** is the research and study of organisms including animals, fungi and plants in their environment, leaning more towards observational than experimental methods of study. It encompasses scientific research but is not limited to it, with articles nowadays more often published in science magazines than in academic journals.\*[1] Grouped among the natural sciences, natural history is the systematic study of any category of natural

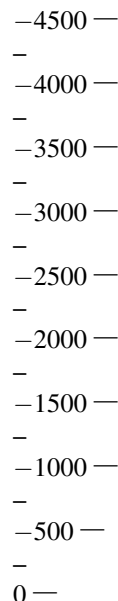
objects or organisms.\* [2] That is a very broad designation in a world filled with many narrowly focused disciplines. So while natural history dates historically from studies in the ancient Greco-Roman world and the mediaeval Arabic world, through to European Renaissance naturalists working in near isolation, today's field is more of a cross discipline umbrella of many specialty sciences. For example, geobiology has a strong multi-disciplinary nature combining scientists and scientific knowledge of many specialty sciences.

A person who studies natural history is known as a **naturalist** or **natural historian**.

### 3.1 Definitions

### 3.1.1 Before 1900

Life timeline  
view • discuss •



*water*  
**Single-celled**  
**life**  
*photosynthesis*  
**Eukaryotes**

**Multicellular  
life**  
**Land life**  
**Dinosaurs**  
**Mammals**  
**Flowers**

←

Earliest Earth (−4540)

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Earliest water

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Earliest life

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LHB meteorites

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Earliest oxygen

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Atmospheric oxygen

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Oxygen crisis

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Earliest sexual reproduction

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Ediacara biota

←

Cambrian explosion

←

Earliest humans

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Cryogenian

Andean

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Quaternary

Axis scale: millions of years.

Orange labels: known *ice ages*.Also see: *Human timeline* and *Nature timeline*

Nature timeline

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*cosmic expansion*

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Earliest light  
*cosmic speed-up*  
 Solar System  
*water*  
 Single-celled life  
*photosynthesis*  
 Multicellular  
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 Land life  
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Axis scale: billions of years.

Also see: *Human timeline* and *Life timeline*

The English term “natural history” is a translation of the Latin *historia naturalis*. Its meaning has narrowed progressively with time, while the meaning of the related term “nature” has widened (see also *History* below). In antiquity, it covered essentially anything connected with nature or which used materials drawn from nature. For example, Pliny the Elder’s encyclopedia of this title, published circa 77 to 79 AD, covers astronomy, geography, man and his technology, medicine and superstition as well as animals and plants.

Medieval European academics considered knowledge to have two main divisions: the humanities (primarily what is now known as classics) and divinity, with science studied largely through texts rather than observation or experiment. The study of nature revived in the Renaissance, and quickly became a third branch of academic knowledge, itself divided into descriptive natural history and natural philosophy, the analytical study of nature. In modern terms, natural philosophy roughly corresponded to modern physics and chemistry, while natural history included the biological and geological sciences. The two were strongly associated. During the heyday of the gentleman scientists, many people contributed to both fields, and early papers in both were commonly read at professional science society meetings such as the Royal Society and the French Academy of Sciences – both founded during the seventeenth century.

Natural history had been encouraged by practical motives, such as Linnaeus’ aspiration to improve the economic condition of Sweden.\* [3] Similarly, the Industrial Revolution prompted the development of geology to help find useful mineral deposits.\* [4]

The astronomer, William Herschel was also a natural historian. Instead of working with plants or minerals he worked with the stars. He spent his time building telescopes to see the stars and the rest of the time watching the stars. In the beginning, he believed there to be an object known as a nebulae, but then later realized it was just another stage in star development. Herschel can be considered a natural historian because he observed the natural world and attempted to understand it. In the process he made charts of all the stars and kept records of all that he saw (while his sister Caroline did all the documenting).\* [5]

### 3.1.2 Since 1900

Modern definitions of natural history come from a variety of fields and sources, and many of the modern definitions emphasize a particular aspect of the field, creating a plurality of definitions with a number of common themes among them. For example, while natural history is most often defined as a type of observation and a subject of



study, it can also be defined as a body of knowledge, and as a craft or a practice, in which the emphasis is placed more on the observer than on the observed.\*[6]



*A natural history collection in a French public secondary school*

Definitions from biologists often focus on the scientific study of individual organisms in their environment, as seen in this definition by Marston Bates: “Natural history is the study of animals and Plants – of organisms. ... I like to think, then, of natural history as the study of life at the level of the individual – of what plants and animals do, how they react to each other and their environment, how they are organized into larger groupings like populations and communities”\*[7] and this more recent definition by D.S. Wilcove and T. Eisner: “The close observation of organisms—their origins, their evolution, their behavior, and their relationships with other species”\*[8] This focus on organisms in their environment is also echoed by H.W. Greene and J.B. Losos: “Natural history focuses on where organisms are and what they do in their environment, including interactions with other organisms. It encompasses changes in internal states insofar as they pertain to what organisms do”\*[9] Some definitions go further, focusing on direct observation of organisms in their environment, both past and present, such as this one by G.A. Bartholomew: “A student of natural history, or a naturalist, studies the world by observing plants and animals directly. Because organisms are functionally inseparable from the environment in which they live and because their structure and function cannot be adequately interpreted without knowing some of their evolutionary history, the study of natural history embraces the study of fossils as well as physiographic and other aspects of the physical environment”\*[10] A common thread in many definitions of natural history is the inclusion of a descriptive component, as seen in a recent definition by H.W. Greene: “Descriptive ecology and ethology”\*[11] Several authors have argued for a more expansive view of natural history, including S. Herman, who defines the field as “the scientific study of plants and animals in their natural environments. It is concerned with levels of organization from the individual organism to the ecosystem, and stresses identification, life history, distribution, abundance, and inter-relationships. It often and appropriately includes an esthetic component”\*[12] and T. Fleischner,

who defines the field even more broadly, as “A practice of intentional, focused attentiveness and receptivity to the more-than-human world, guided by honesty and accuracy”\*[13] These definitions explicitly include the arts in the field of natural history, and are aligned with the broad definition outlined by B. Lopez, who defines the field as the “Patient interrogation of a landscape” while referring to the natural history knowledge of the Eskimo (Inuit).\*[14]

A slightly different framework for natural history, covering a similar range of themes, is also implied in the scope of work encompassed by many leading **natural history museums**, which often include elements of anthropology, geology, paleontology and astronomy along with botany and zoology,\*[15]\*[16] or include both cultural and natural components of the world.\*[17]

The plurality of definitions for this field has been recognized as both a weakness and a strength, and a range of definitions have recently been offered by practitioners in a recent collection of views on natural history.\*[18]

## 3.2 History

### 3.2.1 Ancient times



*Blackberry from the 6th century Vienna Dioscurides manuscript*

Natural history begins with **Aristotle** and other ancient philosophers who analyzed the diversity of the natural world. Natural history was understood by **Pliny the Elder** to cover anything that could be found in the world, including living things, geology, astronomy, technology, art and man.\*[19]

*De Materia Medica* was written between 50 and 70 AD by Pedanius Dioscorides, a Roman physician of Greek origin. It was widely read for more than 1,500 years until supplanted in the Renaissance, making it one of the longest-lasting of all natural history books.

From the ancient Greeks until the work of Carl Linnaeus and other 18th century naturalists, a major concept of natural history was the *scala naturae* or Great Chain of Being, an arrangement of minerals, vegetables, more primitive forms of animals, and more complex life forms on a linear scale of supposedly increasing perfection, culminating in our species.\*[20]

### 3.2.2 Medieval

Natural history was basically static through the Middle Ages in Europe – although in the Arabic and Oriental world it proceeded at a much brisker pace. From the thirteenth century, the work of Aristotle was adapted rather rigidly into Christian philosophy, particularly by Thomas Aquinas, forming the basis for natural theology. During the Renaissance, scholars (herbalists and humanists, particularly) returned to direct observation of plants and animals for natural history, and many began to accumulate large collections of exotic specimens and unusual monsters. Leonhart Fuchs was one of the three founding fathers of botany, along with Otto Brunfels and Hieronymus Bock. Other important contributors to the field were Valerius Cordus, Konrad Gesner (*Historiae animalium*), Frederik Ruysch, or Gaspard Bauhin.\*[21] The rapid increase in the number of known organisms prompted many attempts at classifying and organizing species into taxonomic groups, culminating in the system of the Swedish naturalist Carl Linnaeus.\*[21]

### 3.2.3 Birth of scientific biology

A significant contribution to English natural history was made by parson-naturalists such as Gilbert White, William Kirby, John George Wood, and John Ray, who wrote about plants, animals, and other aspects of nature. Many of these men wrote about nature to make the natural theology argument for the existence or goodness of God.\*[22]

In modern Europe, professional disciplines such as botany, geology, mycology, palaeontology, physiology and zoology were formed. *Natural history*, formerly the main subject taught by college science professors, was increasingly scorned by scientists of a more specialized manner and relegated to an “amateur” activity, rather than a part of science proper. In Victorian Scotland it was believed that the study of natural history contributed to good mental health.\*[23] Particularly in Britain and the United States, this grew into specialist hobbies such as the study of birds, butterflies, seashells (malacology/conchology), beetles and wildflow-



Georges Buffon is best remembered for his *Histoire naturelle*, a 44 volume encyclopedia describing everything known about the natural world.

ers; meanwhile, scientists tried to define a unified discipline of biology (though with only partial success, at least until the modern evolutionary synthesis). Still, the traditions of natural history continue to play a part in the study of biology, especially ecology (the study of natural systems involving living organisms and the inorganic components of the Earth's biosphere that support them), ethology (the scientific study of animal behavior), and evolutionary biology (the study of the relationships between life-forms over very long periods of time), and re-emerges today as integrative organismal biology.

Amateur collectors and natural history entrepreneurs played an important role in building the world's large natural history collections, such as the Natural History Museum, London, and the National Museum of Natural History in Washington D.C.

Three of the greatest English naturalists of the nineteenth century, Henry Walter Bates, Charles Darwin, and Alfred Russel Wallace—who all knew each other—each made natural history travels that took years, collected thousands of specimens, many of them new to science, and by their writings both advanced knowledge of “remote” parts of the world—the Amazon basin, the Galápagos Islands, and the Malay archipelago, among others—and in so doing helped to transform biology from a descriptive to a theory based science.



The understanding of “Nature” as “an organism and not as a mechanism” can be traced to the writings of Alexander Humboldt (Prussia, 1769–1859). Humboldt's copious writings and research were seminal influences for Charles Darwin, Simone Bolivar, Henry David Thoreau, Ernst Haeckel, and John Muir. <sup>\*</sup>[24]

### 3.3 Museums

Further information: List of natural history museums

Natural history museums, which evolved from cabinets of curiosities, played an important role in the emergence of professional biological disciplines and research programs. Particularly in the 19th century, scientists began to use their natural history collections as teaching tools for advanced students and the basis for their own morphological research.

### 3.4 Societies



*The monument of Jan Czekanowski, a president of Polish Copernicus Society of Naturalists (1923–1924), in Szczecin, Poland*

The term “natural history” alone, or sometimes together with archaeology, forms the name of many national, regional and local natural history societies that maintain records for animals (including birds (ornithology), insects (entomology) and mammals (mammalogy)), fungi (mycology), plants (botany) and other organisms. They may also have geological and microscopical sections.

Examples of these societies in Britain include the Natural History Society of Northumbria founded in 1829, London Natural History Society (1858), Birmingham Natural History Society (1859), British Entomological and Natural History Society founded in 1872, Glasgow Natural History Society, Manchester Microscopical and Natural History Society established in 1880, Whitby Naturalists' Club founded in 1913, <sup>\*</sup>[25] Scarborough Field Naturalists' Society and the Sorby Natural History Soci-

ety, Sheffield, founded in 1918. <sup>\*</sup>[26] The growth of natural history societies was also spurred due to the growth of British colonies in tropical regions with numerous new species to be discovered. Many civil servants took an interest in their new surroundings, sending specimens back to museums in Britain. (See also: Indian natural history)

Societies in other countries include the American Society of Naturalists and Polish Copernicus Society of Naturalists.

### 3.5 See also

- Evolutionary history of life
- History of evolutionary thought
- Naturalism (philosophy)
- Nature documentary
- Nature study
- Nature timeline
- Nature writing
- Russian naturalists
- Terra: The Nature of Our World (video podcast)
- Timeline of natural history

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### 3.8 External links

- A History of the Ecological Sciences by Frank N. Egerton Template:Lang en

### 3.7 Further reading

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## Chapter 4

# Humanism

This article is about generic “human-centred philosophy”. For Renaissance humanism, see [Renaissance humanism](#).

“Humanist” redirects here. For other uses, see [Humanist \(disambiguation\)](#).

“Humanistic” redirects here. For the album, see [Humanistic \(album\)](#).

**Humanism** is a philosophical and ethical stance that emphasizes the value and agency of human beings, individually and collectively, and generally prefers critical thinking and evidence (rationalism, empiricism) over acceptance of dogma or superstition. The meaning of the term *humanism* has fluctuated according to the successive intellectual movements which have identified with it.\*[1] The term was coined by theologian Friedrich Niethammer at the beginning of the 19th century. Generally, however, humanism refers to a perspective that affirms some notion of human freedom and progress. In modern times, humanist movements are typically aligned with [secularism](#), and today humanism typically refers to a [non-theistic life stance](#) centred on human agency and looking to science rather than [revelation](#) from a supernatural source to understand the world.\*[2]\*[3]

### 4.1 Background

The word “Humanism” is ultimately derived from the Latin concept *humanitas*, and, like most other words ending in *-ism*, entered English in the nineteenth century. However, historians agree that the concept predates the label invented to describe it, encompassing the various meanings ascribed to *humanitas*, which included both benevolence toward one's fellow humans and the values imparted by *bonae litterae* or humane learning (literally “good letters”).

In the second century AD, a Latin grammarian, [Aulus Gellius](#) (c. 125 – c. 180), complained:

Those who have spoken Latin and have used the language correctly do not give to the word *humanitas* the meaning which it is commonly thought to have, namely, what the

Greeks call [φιλανθρωπία](#) ([philanthropy](#)), signifying a kind of friendly spirit and good-feeling towards all men without distinction; but they gave to *humanitas* the force of the Greek [παιδεία](#) ([paideia](#)); that is, what we call *eruditionem institutionemque in bonas artes*, or “education and training in the [liberal arts](#)”. Those who earnestly desire and seek after these are most highly humanized. For the desire to pursue of that kind of knowledge, and the training given by it, has been granted to humanity alone of all the animals, and for that reason it is termed *humanitas*, or “humanity”.\*[4]

Gellius says that in his day *humanitas* is commonly used as a synonym for [philanthropy](#) – or kindness and benevolence toward one's fellow human beings. Gellius maintains that this common usage is wrong, and that model writers of Latin, such as Cicero and others, used the word only to mean what we might call “humane” or “polite” learning, or the Greek equivalent [Paideia](#). Yet in seeking to restrict the meaning of *humanitas* to literary education this way, Gellius was not advocating a retreat from political engagement into some ivory tower, though it might look like that to us. He himself was involved in public affairs. According to legal historian Richard Bauman, Gellius was a judge as well as a grammarian and was an active participant the great contemporary debate on harsh punishments that accompanied the legal reforms of [Antoninus Pius](#) (one these reforms, for example, was that a prisoner was not to be treated as guilty before being tried). “By assigning pride of place to *Paideia* in his comment on the etymology of *humanitas*, Gellius implies that the trained mind is best equipped to handle the problems troubling society.”\*[5]

Gellius's writings fell into obscurity during the middle ages, but during the Italian Renaissance, Gellius became a favorite author. Teachers and scholars of Greek and Latin grammar, rhetoric, philosophy, and poetry were called and called themselves “humanists”.\*[6]\*[7] Modern scholars, however, point out that [Cicero](#) (106 – 43 BCE), who was most responsible for defining and popularizing the term *humanitas*, in fact frequently used the word in both senses, as did his near contemporaries. For Cicero, a lawyer, what most distinguished humans from

brutes was speech, which, allied to reason, could (and should) enable them to settle disputes and live together in concord and harmony under the rule of law.\*[8] Thus *humanitas* included two meanings from the outset and these continue in the modern derivative, *humanism*, which even today can refer to both humanitarian benevolence and to a method of study and debate involving an accepted group of authors and a careful and accurate use of language.\*[9]

During the **French Revolution**, and soon after, in Germany (by the **Left Hegelians**), *humanism* began to refer to an ethical philosophy centered on humankind, without attention to the **transcendent** or **supernatural**. The designation **Religious Humanism** refers to organized groups that sprang up during the late-nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. It is similar to **Protestantism**, although centered on human needs, interests, and abilities rather than the supernatural.\*[10] In the Anglophone world, such modern, organized forms of humanism, which are rooted in the 18th-century **Enlightenment**, have to a considerable extent more or less detached themselves from the historic connection of humanism with **classical learning** and the **liberal arts**.

The first *Humanist Manifesto* was issued by a conference held at the **University of Chicago** in 1933.\*[11] Signatories included the philosopher **John Dewey**, but the majority were ministers (chiefly **Unitarian**) and **theologians**. They identified humanism as an ideology that espouses **reason**, **ethics**, and **social and economic justice**, and they called for science to replace **dogma** and the **supernatural** as the basis of **morality** and **decision-making**.\*[12]\*[13]

## 4.2 History

In 1808 Bavarian educational commissioner **Friedrich Immanuel Niethammer** coined the term *Humanismus* to describe the new **classical curriculum** he planned to offer in German secondary schools,\*[14] and by 1836 the word “humanism” had been absorbed into the English language in this sense. The coinage gained universal acceptance in 1856, when German historian and philologist **Georg Voigt** used *humanism* to describe **Renaissance humanism**, the movement that flourished in the Italian **Renaissance** to revive classical learning, a use which won wide acceptance among historians in many nations, especially Italy.\*[15]

But in the mid-18th century, during the French Enlightenment, a more ideological use of the term had come into use. In 1765, the author of an anonymous article in a French Enlightenment periodical spoke of “The general love of humanity ... a virtue hitherto quite nameless among us, and which we will venture to call ‘humanism’, for the time has come to create a word for such a beautiful and necessary thing”.\*[16] The latter part of the 18th and the early 19th centuries saw the creation of numerous grass-roots “philanthropic” and benevolent soci-



*An ideal society as conceived by Renaissance humanist Saint Thomas More in his book Utopia*

eties dedicated to human betterment and the spreading of knowledge (some Christian, some not). After the **French Revolution**, the idea that human virtue could be created by human reason alone independently from traditional religious institutions, attributed by opponents of the Revolution to **Enlightenment philosophes** such as **Rousseau**, was violently attacked by influential religious and political conservatives, such as **Edmund Burke** and **Joseph de Maistre**, as a deification or idolatry of humanity.\*[17] Humanism began to acquire a negative sense. The *Oxford English Dictionary* records the use of the word “humanism” by an English clergyman in 1812 to indicate those who believe in the “mere humanity” (as opposed to the divine nature) of Christ, i.e., **Unitarians** and **Deists**.\*[18] In this polarised atmosphere, in which established ecclesiastical bodies tended to **circle the wagons** and reflexively oppose political and social reforms like extending the franchise, universal schooling, and the like, liberal reformers and radicals embraced the idea of Humanism as an alternative religion of humanity. The anarchist **Proudhon** (best known for declaring that “**property is theft**”) used the word “humanism” to describe a “*culte, déification de l’humanité*” (“worship, deification of humanity”) and **Ernest Renan** in *L’avenir de la science: pensées de 1848* (“The Future of Knowledge: Thoughts on 1848”) (1848–49), states: “It is my deep conviction that pure *humanism* will be the religion of the future, that is, the cult of all that pertains to humanity—all of life, sanctified and raised to the level of a moral value.”\*[19]

At about the same time, the word “humanism” as a philosophy centred on humankind (as opposed to institutionalised religion) was also being used in Germany by the so-called **Left Hegelians**, **Arnold Ruge**, and **Karl Marx**, who were critical of the close involvement of the church in the German government. There has been a persistent confusion between the several uses of the terms: <sup>[1]</sup>philanthropic humanists look to what they consider their antecedents in critical thinking and human-centered philosophy among the Greek philosophers and the great figures of Renaissance history; and scholarly humanists stress the linguistic and cultural disciplines needed to understand and interpret these philosophers and artists.

### 4.2.1 Predecessors

#### Ancient South Asia

Human-centered philosophy that rejected the supernatural may also be found circa 1500 BCE in the **Lokayata** system of Indian philosophy. **Nasadiya Sukta**, a passage in the **Rig Veda**, contains one of the first recorded assertions of agnosticism. In the 6th-century BCE, **Gautama Buddha** expressed, in **Pali literature** a skeptical attitude toward the supernatural: <sup>[20]</sup>

Since neither soul, nor aught belonging to soul, can really and truly exist, the view which holds that this I who am 'world', who am 'soul', shall hereafter live permanent, persisting, unchanging, yea abide eternally: is not this utterly and entirely a foolish doctrine?

Another instance of ancient humanism as an organised system of thought is found in the **Gathas** of **Zarathustra**, composed between 1,000 BCE – 600 BCE <sup>[21]</sup> in **Greater Iran**. Zarathustra's philosophy in the Gathas lays out a conception of humankind as thinking beings, dignified with choice and agency according to the intellect which each receives from **Ahura Mazda** (God in the form of supreme wisdom). The idea of Ahura Mazda as a non-intervening deistic god or **Great Architect of the Universe** was combined with a unique eschatology and ethical system which implied that each person is held morally responsible in the afterlife, for their choices they freely made in life. <sup>[22]</sup> This importance placed upon thought, action and personal responsibility, and the concept of a non-intervening creator, was a source of inspiration to a number of **Enlightenment** humanist thinkers in Europe such as **Voltaire** and **Montesquieu**.

#### Ancient China

Main article: **Chinese philosophy**

In China, **Yellow Emperor** is regarded as the humanistic primogenitor. Sage kings such as **Yao** and **Shun** are humanistic figures as recorded. **King Wu of Zhou** has the famous saying: “Humanity is the Ling (efficacious essence) of the world (among all).” Among them **Duke of Zhou**, respected as a founder of **Rujia** (Confucianism), is especially prominent and pioneering in humanistic thought. His words were recorded in the **Book of History** as follows (translation):

What the people desire, Heaven certainly complies?

Heaven (or “God”) is not believable. Our **Tao** (special term referring to “the way of nature”) includes morality (derived from the philosophy of former sage kings and to be continued forward).

In the 6th century BCE, **Taoist** teacher **Lao Tzu** espoused a series of **naturalistic** concepts with some elements of humanistic philosophy. The **Silver Rule of Confucianism** from **Analects** XV.24, is an example of ethical philosophy based on human values rather than the supernatural. Humanistic thought is also contained in other Confucian classics, e.g., as recorded in **Zuo Zhuan**, **Ji Liang** says, “People is the zhu (master, lord, dominance, owner or origin) of gods. So, to sage kings, people first, gods second”; **Neishi Guo** says, “Gods, clever, righteous and wholehearted, comply with human.” **Taoist** and **Confucian** secularism contain elements of moral thought devoid of religious authority or deism however they only partly resembled our modern concept of secularism.

#### Ancient Greece

Main article: **Ancient Greek philosophy**

6th-century BCE **pre-Socratic** Greek philosophers **Thales of Miletus** and **Xenophanes of Colophon** were the first in the region to attempt to explain the world in terms of human reason rather than myth and tradition, thus can be said to be the first Greek humanists. Thales questioned the notion of anthropomorphic gods and Xenophanes refused to recognise the gods of his time and reserved the divine for the principle of unity in the universe. These **Ionian Greeks** were the first thinkers to assert that nature is available to be studied separately from the supernatural realm. **Anaxagoras** brought philosophy and the spirit of rational inquiry from **Ionia** to **Athens**. **Pericles**, the leader of Athens during the period of its greatest glory was an admirer of Anaxagoras. Other influential pre-Socratics or rational philosophers include **Protagoras** (like Anaxagoras a friend of Pericles), known for his famous dictum “man is the measure of all things” and **Democritus**, who proposed that matter was composed of atoms. Little of the written work of these early philosophers survives and they are known mainly from fragments and quotations in



other writers, principally **Plato** and **Aristotle**. The historian **Thucydides**, noted for his scientific and rational approach to history, is also much admired by later humanists.\*[23] In the 3rd century BCE, **Epicurus** became known for his concise phrasing of the **problem of evil**, lack of belief in the afterlife, and human-centred approaches to achieving **eudaimonia**. He was also the first Greek philosopher to admit women to his school as a rule.

### Medieval Islam

See also: **Early Islamic philosophy**

Many medieval Muslim thinkers pursued humanistic, **rational** and scientific **discourses** in their search for knowledge, meaning and **values**. A wide range of Islamic writings on love, poetry, history and **philosophical theology** show that medieval Islamic thought was open to the humanistic ideas of **individualism**, **occasional secularism**, **skepticism**, and **liberalism**.\*[24]

According to Imad-ad-Dean Ahmad, another reason the Islamic world flourished during the Middle Ages was an early emphasis on **freedom of speech**, as summarised by al-Hashimi (a cousin of Caliph **al-Ma'mun**) in the following letter to one of the religious opponents he was attempting to **convert** through **reason**.\*[25]

Bring forward all the arguments you wish and say whatever you please and speak your mind freely. Now that you are safe and free to say whatever you please appoint some arbitrator who will impartially judge between us and lean only towards the truth and be free from the empery of passion, and that arbitrator shall be **Reason**, whereby God makes us responsible for our own rewards and punishments. Herein I have dealt justly with you and have given you full security and am ready to accept whatever decision Reason may give for me or against me. For “There is no compulsion in religion” (**Qur'an 2:256**) and I have only invited you to accept our faith willingly and of your own accord and have pointed out the hideousness of your present belief. Peace be with you and the blessings of God!

According to George Makdisi, certain aspects of **Renaissance humanism** has its roots in the **medieval Islamic world**, including the “art of **dictation**, called in Latin, **ars dictaminis**”, and “the humanist attitude toward classical language”.\*[26]

### 4.2.2 Renaissance

Main article: **Renaissance humanism**

Renaissance humanism was an intellectual movement in



*Portrait of Petrarch painted in 1376*

Europe of the later **Middle Ages** and the **Early Modern** period. The 19th-century German historian **Georg Voigt** (1827–91) identified **Petrarch** as the first Renaissance humanist. **Paul Johnson** agrees that Petrarch was “the first to put into words the notion that the centuries between the fall of Rome and the present had been the age of **Darkness**”. According to Petrarch, what was needed to remedy this situation was the careful study and imitation of the great classical authors. For Petrarch and **Boccaccio**, the greatest master was **Cicero**, whose prose became the model for both learned (Latin) and vernacular (Italian) prose.

Once the language was mastered grammatically it could be used to attain the second stage, eloquence or rhetoric. This art of persuasion [Cicero had held] was not art for its own sake, but the acquisition of the capacity to persuade others – all men and women – to lead the good life. As Petrarch put it, 'it is better to will the good than to know the truth'. Rhetoric thus led to and embraced philosophy. **Leonardo Bruni** (c. 1369–1444), the outstanding scholar of the new generation, insisted that it was Petrarch who “opened the way for us to show how to acquire learning”, but it was in Bruni's time that the word *umanista* first came into use, and its subjects of study were listed as five: grammar, rhetoric, poetry, moral philosophy, and history”.\*[27]

The basic training of the humanist was to speak well and write (typically, in the form of a letter). One of Petrarch's followers, **Coluccio Salutati** (1331–1406) was made chancellor of **Florence**, “whose interests he defended with his literary skill. The Visconti of Milan claimed that Salutati’s pen had done more damage than ‘thirty squadrons of Florentine cavalry’”.\*[28]



Coluccio Salutati, Chancellor of Florence and disciple of Petrarch (1331–1406)

Contrary to a still widely held interpretation that originated in Voigt's celebrated contemporary, Jacob Burckhardt,\*[30] and which was adopted wholeheartedly – especially by modern thinkers calling themselves “humanists” – \*[31] most specialists today do not characterise Renaissance humanism as a philosophical movement, nor in any way as anti-Christian or even anti-clerical. A modern historian has this to say:

Humanism was not an ideological programme but a body of literary knowledge and linguistic skill based on the “revival of good letters”, which was a revival of a late-antique philology and grammar. This is how the word “humanist” was understood by contemporaries, and if scholars would agree to accept the word in this sense rather than in the sense in which it was used in the nineteenth century we might be spared a good deal of useless argument. That humanism had profound social and even political consequences of the life of Italian courts is not to be doubted. But the idea that as a movement it was in some way inimical to the Church, or to the conservative social order in general is one that has been put forward for a century and more without any



FR. POGGIO

Poggio Bracciolini (1380–1459), an early Renaissance humanist, book collector, and reformer of script, who served as papal secretary\*[29]

substantial proof being offered.

The nineteenth-century historian Jacob Burckhardt, in his classic work, *The Civilization of the Renaissance in Italy*, noted as a “curious fact” that some men of the new culture were “men of the strictest piety, or even ascetics”. If he had meditated more deeply on the meaning of the careers of such humanists as Abrogio Traversari (1386–1439), the General of the Camaldolese Order, perhaps he would not have gone on to describe humanism in unqualified terms as “pagan”, and thus helped precipitate a century of infertile debate about the possible existence of something called “Christian humanism” which ought to be opposed to “pagan humanism”.

—Peter Partner, *Renaissance Rome, Portrait of a Society 1500–1559* (University of California Press 1979) pp. 14–15.

The *umanisti* criticised what they considered the barbarous Latin of the universities, but the revival of the humanities largely did not conflict with the teaching of traditional university subjects, which went on as before.\*[32]

Nor did the humanists view themselves as in conflict with Christianity. Some, like Salutati, were the Chancellors of Italian cities, but the majority (including Petrarch) were ordained as priests, and many worked as senior officials of the Papal court. Humanist Renaissance popes Nicholas V, Pius II, Sixtus IV, and Leo X wrote books and amassed



huge libraries.\* [33]

In the high Renaissance, in fact, there was a hope that more direct knowledge of the wisdom of antiquity, including the writings of the Church fathers, the earliest known Greek texts of the Christian Gospels, and in some cases even the Jewish *Kabbalah*, would initiate a harmonious new era of universal agreement.\* [34] With this end in view, Renaissance Church authorities afforded humanists what in retrospect appears a remarkable degree of freedom of thought.\* [35]\* [36] One humanist, the Greek Orthodox Platonist *Gemistus Pletho* (1355–1452), based in *Mystras*, Greece (but in contact with humanists in Florence, Venice, and Rome) taught a Christianised version of pagan *polytheism*.\* [37]

### Back to the sources



Portrait of Erasmus of Rotterdam

The humanists' close study of *Latin* literary texts soon enabled them to discern historical differences in the writing styles of different periods. By analogy with what they saw as decline of Latin, they applied the principle of *ad fontes*, or back to the sources, across broad areas of learning, seeking out manuscripts of Patristic literature as well as pagan authors. In 1439, while employed in *Naples* at the court of *Alfonso V of Aragon* (at the time engaged in a dispute with the Papal States) the humanist *Lorenzo Valla* used stylistic textual analysis, now called *philology*, to prove that the *Donation of Constantine*, which purported to confer temporal powers on the Pope of Rome, was an 8th-century forgery.\* [38] For the next 70 years, however, neither Valla nor any of his contemporaries thought

to apply the techniques of philology to other controversial manuscripts in this way. Instead, after the fall of the *Byzantine Empire* to the Turks in 1453, which brought a flood of Greek Orthodox refugees to Italy, humanist scholars increasingly turned to the study of *Neoplatonism* and *Hermeticism*, hoping to bridge the differences between the Greek and Roman Churches, and even between Christianity itself and the non-Christian world.\* [39] The refugees brought with them Greek manuscripts, not only of Plato and Aristotle, but also of the Christian Gospels, previously unavailable in the Latin West.

After 1517, when the new invention of printing made these texts widely available, the Dutch humanist *Erasmus*, who had studied Greek at the Venetian printing house of *Aldus Manutius*, began a philological analysis of the Gospels in the spirit of Valla, comparing the Greek originals with their Latin translations with a view to correcting errors and discrepancies in the latter. Erasmus, along with the French humanist *Jacques Lefèvre d'Étaples*, began issuing new translations, laying the groundwork for the Protestant Reformation. Henceforth Renaissance humanism, particularly in the German North, became concerned with religion, while Italian and French humanism concentrated increasingly on scholarship and philology addressed to a narrow audience of specialists, studiously avoiding topics that might offend despotic rulers or which might be seen as corrosive of faith. After the Reformation, critical examination of the Bible did not resume until the advent of the so-called *Higher criticism* of the 19th-century German *Tübingen school*.

### Consequences

The *ad fontes* principle also had many applications. The re-discovery of ancient manuscripts brought a more profound and accurate knowledge of ancient philosophical schools such as *Epicureanism*, and *Neoplatonism*, whose Pagan wisdom the humanists, like the Church fathers of old, tended, at least initially, to consider as deriving from divine revelation and thus adaptable to a life of Christian virtue.\* [40] The line from a drama of *Terence*, *Homo sum, humani nihil a me alienum puto* (or with *nil* for *nihil*), meaning “I am a human being, I think nothing human alien to me”,\* [41] known since antiquity through the endorsement of Saint Augustine, gained renewed currency as epitomising the humanist attitude. The statement, in a play modeled or borrowed from a (now lost) Greek comedy by Menander, may have originated in a lighthearted vein – as a comic rationale for an old man's meddling – but it quickly became a proverb and throughout the ages was quoted with a deeper meaning, by Cicero and Saint Augustine, to name a few, and most notably by *Seneca*. Richard Bauman writes:

*Homo sum: humani nihil a me alienum puto.*, I am a human being: and I deem nothing pertaining to humanity is foreign to me.

The words of the comic playwright P. Terentius Afer reverberated across the Roman world of the mid-2nd century BCE and beyond. Terence, an African and a former slave, was well placed to preach the message of universalism, of the essential unity of the human race, that had come down in philosophical form from the Greeks, but needed the pragmatic muscles of Rome in order to become a practical reality. The influence of Terence's felicitous phrase on Roman thinking about human rights can hardly be overestimated. Two hundred years later Seneca ended his seminal exposition of the unity of humankind with a clarion-call:

There is one short rule that should regulate human relationships. All that you see, both divine and human, is one. We are parts of the same great body. Nature created us from the same source and to the same end. She imbued us with mutual affection and sociability, she taught us to be fair and just, to suffer injury rather than to inflict it. She bid us extend our hands to all in need of help. Let that well-known line be in our heart and on our lips: *Homo sum, humani nihil a me alienum puto.* \* [42]

Better acquaintance with Greek and Roman technical writings also influenced the development of European science (see the [history of science in the Renaissance](#)). This was despite what A. C. Crombie (viewing the Renaissance in the 19th-century manner as a chapter in the heroic March of Progress) calls “a backwards-looking admiration for antiquity”, in which Platonism stood in opposition to the [Aristotelian](#) concentration on the observable properties of the physical world. \* [43] But Renaissance humanists, who considered themselves as restoring the glory and nobility of antiquity, had no interest in scientific innovation. However, by the mid-to-late 16th century, even the universities, though still dominated by Scholasticism, began to demand that Aristotle be read in accurate texts edited according to the principles of Renaissance philology, thus setting the stage for Galileo's quarrels with the outmoded habits of Scholasticism.

Just as artist and inventor [Leonardo da Vinci](#) – partaking of the *zeitgeist* though not himself a humanist – advocated study of human [anatomy](#), nature, and weather to enrich Renaissance works of art, so Spanish-born humanist [Juan Luis Vives](#) (c. 1493–1540) advocated observation, craft, and practical techniques to improve the formal teaching of Aristotelian philosophy at the universities, helping to free them from the grip of Medieval Scholasticism. \* [44] Thus, the stage was set for the adoption of an approach to [natural philosophy](#), based on [empirical](#) observations and experimentation of the physical universe, making possible the advent of the age of scientific inquiry that followed the Renaissance. \* [45]

It was in education that the humanists' program had the most lasting results, their curriculum and methods:

were followed everywhere, serving as models for the Protestant Reformers as well as the Jesuits. The humanistic school, animated by the idea that the study of classical languages and literature provided valuable information and intellectual discipline as well as moral standards and a civilised taste for future rulers, leaders, and professionals of its society, flourished without interruption, through many significant changes, until our own century, surviving many religious, political and social revolutions. It has but recently been replaced, though not yet completely, by other more practical and less demanding forms of education. \* [46]

### 4.2.3 From Renaissance to modern humanism

Early humanists saw no conflict between reason and their Christian faith (see [Christian Humanism](#)). They inveighed against the abuses of the Church, but not against the Church itself, much less against religion. For them, the word “[secular](#)” carried no connotations of disbelief – that would come later, in the nineteenth century. In the Renaissance to be secular meant simply to be in the world rather than in a monastery. Petrarch frequently admitted that his brother Gherardo's life as a Carthusian monk was superior to his own (although Petrarch himself was in [Minor Orders](#) and was employed by the Church all his life). He hoped that he could do some good by winning earthly glory and praising virtue, inferior though that might be to a life devoted solely to prayer. By embracing a non-theistic philosophic base, \* [47] however, the methods of the humanists, combined with their eloquence, would ultimately have a corrosive effect on established authority.

Yet it was from the Renaissance that modern Secular Humanism grew, with the development of an important split between reason and religion. This occurred as the church's complacent authority was exposed in two vital areas. In science, Galileo's support of the Copernican revolution upset the church's adherence to the theories of Aristotle, exposing them as false. In theology, the Dutch scholar Erasmus with his new Greek text showed that the Roman Catholic adherence to Jerome's Vulgate was frequently in error. A tiny wedge was thus forced between reason and authority, as both of them were then understood. \* [48]

For some, this meant turning back to the Bible as the source of authority instead of the Catholic Church, for others it was a split from theism altogether. This was the main divisive line between the Reformation and the Renaissance, \* [49] which dealt with the same basic problems, supported the same science based on reason and



empirical research, but had a different set of presuppositions (theistic versus naturalistic).\*[47]

#### 4.2.4 19th and 20th centuries

The phrase the “religion of humanity” is sometimes attributed to American Founding Father Thomas Paine, though as yet unattested in his surviving writings. According to Tony Davies:

Paine called himself a *theophilanthropist*, a word combining the Greek for “God”, “love”, and “humanity”, and indicating that while he believed in the existence of a creating intelligence in the universe, he entirely rejected the claims made by and for all existing religious doctrines, especially their miraculous, transcendental and salvationist pretensions. The Parisian “Society of Theophilanthropy” which he sponsored, is described by his biographer as “a forerunner of the ethical and humanist societies that proliferated later” ... [Paine's book] the trenchantly witty *Age of Reason* (1793) ... pours scorn on the supernatural pretensions of scripture, combining Voltairean mockery with Paine's own style of taproom ridicule to expose the absurdity of a theology built on a collection of incoherent Levantine folktales.\*[50]

Davies identifies Paine's *The Age of Reason* as “the link between the two major narratives of what Jean-François Lyotard\*[51] calls the narrative of legitimation”: the rationalism of the 18th-century *Philosophes* and the radical, historically based German 19th-century Biblical criticism of the Hegelians David Friedrich Strauss and Ludwig Feuerbach. “The first is political, largely French in inspiration, and projects ‘humanity as the hero of liberty’. The second is philosophical, German, seeks the totality and autonomy of knowledge, and stresses *understanding* rather than freedom as the key to human fulfilment and emancipation. The two themes converged and competed in complex ways in the 19th century and beyond, and between them set the boundaries of its various humanisms.\*[52] *Homo homini deus est* (“The human being is a god to humanity” or “god is nothing [other than] the human being to himself”), Feuerbach had written.\*[53]

Victorian novelist Mary Ann Evans, known to the world as George Eliot, translated Strauss's *Das Leben Jesu* (“*The Life of Jesus*”, 1846) and Ludwig Feuerbach's *Das Wesen Christentums* (“*The Essence of Christianity*”). She wrote to a friend:

the fellowship between man and man which has been the principle of development, social and moral, is not dependent on conceptions of

what is not man ... the idea of God, so far as it has been a high spiritual influence, is the ideal of goodness entirely human (i.e., an exaltation of the human).\*[54]

Eliot and her circle, who included her companion George Henry Lewes (the biographer of Goethe) and the abolitionist and social theorist Harriet Martineau, were much influenced by the positivism of Auguste Comte, whom Martineau had translated. Comte had proposed an atheistic *culte* founded on human principles – a secular Religion of Humanity (which worshiped the dead, since most humans who have ever lived are dead), complete with holidays and liturgy, modeled on the rituals of what was seen as a discredited and dilapidated Catholicism.\*[55] Although Comte's English followers, like Eliot and Martineau, for the most part rejected the full gloomy panoply of his system, they liked the idea of a religion of humanity. Comte's austere vision of the universe, his injunction to “*vivre pour autrui*” (“live for others”, from which comes the word “altruism”),\*[56] and his idealisation of women inform the works of Victorian novelists and poets from George Eliot and Matthew Arnold to Thomas Hardy.

The British Humanistic Religious Association was formed as one of the earliest forerunners of contemporary chartered Humanist organisations in 1853 in London. This early group was democratically organised, with male and female members participating in the election of the leadership, and promoted knowledge of the sciences, philosophy, and the arts.\*[57]

In February 1877, the word was used pejoratively, apparently for the first time in America, to describe Felix Adler. Adler, however, did not embrace the term, and instead coined the name “Ethical Culture” for his new movement – a movement which still exists in the now Humanist-affiliated New York Society for Ethical Culture.\*[58] In 2008, Ethical Culture Leaders wrote: “Today, the historic identification, Ethical Culture, and the modern description, Ethical Humanism, are used interchangeably.”\*[59]

Active in the early 1920s, F.C.S. Schiller labelled his work “humanism” but for Schiller the term referred to the pragmatist philosophy he shared with William James. In 1929, Charles Francis Potter founded the First Humanist Society of New York whose advisory board included Julian Huxley, John Dewey, Albert Einstein and Thomas Mann. Potter was a minister from the Unitarian tradition and in 1930 he and his wife, Clara Cook Potter, published *Humanism: A New Religion*. Throughout the 1930s, Potter was an advocate of such liberal causes as women's rights, access to birth control, “civil divorce laws”, and an end to capital punishment.\*[60]

Raymond B. Bragg, the associate editor of *The New Humanist*, sought to consolidate the input of Leon Milton Birkhead, Charles Francis Potter, and several members of the Western Unitarian Conference. Bragg asked Roy

Wood Sellars to draft a document based on this information which resulted in the publication of the *Humanist Manifesto* in 1933. Potter's book and the Manifesto became the cornerstones of modern humanism, the latter declaring a new religion by saying, "any religion that can hope to be a synthesising and dynamic force for today must be shaped for the needs of this age. To establish such a religion is a major necessity of the present." It then presented 15 theses of humanism as foundational principles for this new religion.

In 1941, the American Humanist Association was organised. Noted members of The AHA included Isaac Asimov, who was the president from 1985 until his death in 1992, and writer Kurt Vonnegut, who followed as honorary president until his death in 2007. Gore Vidal became honorary president in 2009. Robert Buckman was the head of the association in Canada, and is now an honorary president.

After World War II, three prominent Humanists became the first directors of major divisions of the United Nations: Julian Huxley of UNESCO, Brock Chisholm of the World Health Organisation, and John Boyd-Orr of the Food and Agricultural Organisation.\*[61]

In 2004, American Humanist Association, along with other groups representing agnostics, atheists, and other freethinkers, joined to create the Secular Coalition for America which advocates in Washington, D.C., for separation of church and state and nationally for the greater acceptance of nontheistic Americans. The Executive Director of Secular Coalition for America is Sean Faircloth, a long-time state legislator from Maine.

## 4.3 Types

### 4.3.1 Scholarly tradition

#### Renaissance humanists

Main article: Renaissance humanism

"Renaissance humanism" is the name later given to a tradition of cultural and educational reform engaged in by civic and ecclesiastical chancellors, book collectors, educators, and writers, who by the late fifteenth century began to be referred to as *umanisti* – "humanists".\*[6] It developed during the fourteenth and the beginning of the fifteenth centuries, and was a response to the challenge of scholastic university education, which was then dominated by Aristotelian philosophy and logic. Scholasticism focused on preparing men to be doctors, lawyers or professional theologians, and was taught from approved textbooks in logic, natural philosophy, medicine, law and theology.\*[62] There were important centres of humanism at Florence, Naples, Rome, Venice, Mantua, Ferrara, and Urbino.

Humanists reacted against this utilitarian approach and the narrow pedantry associated with it. They sought to create a citizenry (frequently including women) able to speak and write with eloquence and clarity and thus capable of engaging the civic life of their communities and persuading others to virtuous and prudent actions. This was to be accomplished through the study of the *studia humanitatis*, today known as the humanities: grammar, rhetoric, history, poetry and moral philosophy.\*[63] As a program to revive the cultural – and particularly the literary – legacy and moral philosophy of classical antiquity, Humanism was a pervasive cultural mode and not the program of a few isolated geniuses like Rabelais or Erasmus as is still sometimes popularly believed.\*[64]

### 4.3.2 Non-theistic worldviews

#### Secular humanists

Main article: Secular humanism

Secular humanism is a comprehensive life stance or world view which embraces human reason, metaphysical naturalism, altruistic morality and distributive justice, and consciously rejects supernatural claims, theistic faith and religiosity, pseudoscience, and superstition.\*[65]\*[66] It is sometimes referred to as Humanism (with a capital H and no qualifying adjective).

The International Humanist and Ethical Union (IHEU) is the world union of 117 Humanist, rationalist, irreligious, atheistic, Bright, secular, Ethical Culture, and freethought organisations in 38 countries.\*[67] The "Happy Human" is the official symbol of the IHEU as well as being regarded as a universally recognised symbol for secular humanism.

According to the IHEU's bylaw 5.1:\*[68]

Humanism is a democratic and ethical life stance, which affirms that human beings have the right and responsibility to give meaning and shape to their own lives. It stands for the building of a more humane society through an ethic based on human and other natural values in the spirit of reason and free inquiry through human capabilities. It is not theistic, and it does not accept supernatural views of reality.

#### Religious humanists

Main article: Religious humanism

"Religious humanists" are non-superstitious people who nevertheless see ethical humanism as their religion, and who seek to integrate (secular) humanist ethical philosophy with congregational rituals centred on human needs, interests, and abilities. Though practitioners of religious

humanism did not officially organise under the name of “humanism” until the late 19th and early 20th centuries, non-theistic religions paired with human-centred ethical philosophy have a long history. A unified **Ethical Culture** movement was first founded in 1876; its founder, **Felix Adler** was a former member of the **Free Religious Association**, and conceived of Ethical Culture as a new religion that would retain the ethical message at the heart of all religions. Ethical Culture was religious in the sense of playing a defining role in people's lives and addressing issues of ultimate concern. Nowadays religious humanists in the United States are represented by organisations such as the **American Ethical Union**, and will simply describe themselves as “ethical humanists” or “humanists”. Secular humanists and religious humanists organise together as part of larger national and international groupings, and differentiate themselves primarily in their attitude to the promotion of humanist thinking.

Earlier attempts at inventing a secular religious tradition informed the Ethical Culture movement. The **Cult of Reason** (French: *Culte de la Raison*) was a religion based on deism devised during the **French Revolution** by **Jacques Hébert**, **Pierre Gaspard Chaumette** and their supporters.\*[69] In 1793 during the **French Revolution**, the cathedral **Notre Dame de Paris** was turned into a “**Temple of Reason**” and for a time **Lady Liberty** replaced the **Virgin Mary** on several altars.\*[70] In the 1850s, **Auguste Comte**, the Father of Sociology, founded **Positivism**, a “religion of humanity”.\*[71] One of the earliest forerunners of contemporary chartered humanist organisations was the **Humanistic Religious Association** formed in 1853 in London. This early group was democratically organised, with male and female members participating in the election of the leadership and promoted knowledge of the sciences, philosophy, and the arts.\*[71]

## 4.4 Criticisms

Polemics about humanism have sometimes assumed paradoxical twists and turns. Early 20th century critics such as **Ezra Pound**, **T. E. Hulme**, and **T. S. Eliot** considered humanism to be sentimental “slop” (Hulme) or “an old bitch gone in the teeth” (Pound)\*[72] and wanted to go back to a more manly, authoritarian society such as existed in the Middle Ages. **Postmodern** critics who are self-described anti-humanists, such as **Jean-François Lyotard** and **Michel Foucault**, have asserted that humanism posits an overarching and excessively abstract notion of humanity or universal **human nature**, which can then be used as a pretext for imperialism and domination of those deemed somehow less than human. “Humanism fabricates the human as much as it fabricates the nonhuman animal”, suggests **Timothy Laurie**, turning the human into what he calls “a placeholder for a range of attributes that have been considered most virtuous among humans (e.g. rationality, altruism), rather than most common-

place (e.g. hunger, anger)”.\*[73] Nevertheless, philosopher **Kate Soper**\*[74] notes that by faulting humanism for falling short of its own benevolent ideals, anti-humanism thus frequently “secretes a humanist rhetoric”.\*[75]

In his book, *Humanism* (1997), **Tony Davies** calls these critics “humanist anti-humanists”. Critics of antihumanism, most notably **Jürgen Habermas**, counter that while antihumanists may highlight humanism's failure to fulfil its emancipatory ideal, they do not offer an alternative emancipatory project of their own.\*[76] Others, like the German philosopher **Heidegger** considered themselves humanists on the model of the ancient Greeks, but thought humanism applied only to the German “race” and specifically to the Nazis and thus, in Davies' words, were anti-humanist humanists.\*[77] Such a reading of Heidegger's thought is itself deeply controversial; Heidegger includes his own views and critique of Humanism in *Letter On Humanism*. Davies acknowledges that after the horrific experiences of the wars of the 20th century “it should no longer be possible to formulate phrases like ‘the destiny of man’ or the ‘triumph of human reason’ without an instant consciousness of the folly and brutality they drag behind them”. For “it is almost impossible to think of a crime that has not been committed in the name of human reason”. Yet, he continues, “it would be unwise to simply abandon the ground occupied by the historical humanisms. For one thing humanism remains on many occasions the only available alternative to bigotry and persecution. The freedom to speak and write, to organise and campaign in defence of individual or collective interests, to protest and disobey: all these can only be articulated in humanist terms.”\*[78]

Modern humanists, such as **Corliss Lamont** or **Carl Sagan**, hold that humanity must seek for truth through reason and the best observable evidence and endorse **scientific skepticism** and the **scientific method**. However, they stipulate that decisions about right and wrong must be based on the individual and common good, with no consideration given to metaphysical or supernatural beings. The idea is to engage with what is human.\*[79] The ultimate goal is human flourishing; making life better for all humans, and as the most conscious species, also promoting concern for the welfare of other sentient beings and the planet as a whole.\*[80] The focus is on doing good and living well in the here and now, and leaving the world a better place for those who come after. In 1925, the English mathematician and philosopher **Alfred North Whitehead** cautioned: “The prophecy of **Francis Bacon** has now been fulfilled; and man, who at times dreamt of himself as a little lower than the angels, has submitted to become the servant and the minister of nature. It still remains to be seen whether the same actor can play both parts”.\*[81]

## 4.5 Humanistic psychology

Main article: [Humanistic psychology](#)

Humanistic psychology is a psychological perspective which rose to prominence in the mid-20th century in response to Sigmund Freud's psychoanalytic theory and B. F. Skinner's Behaviorism. The approach emphasizes an individual's inherent drive towards self-actualization and creativity. Psychologists [Carl Rogers](#) and [Abraham Maslow](#) introduced a positive, humanistic psychology in response to what they viewed as the overly pessimistic view of psychoanalysis in the early 1960s. Other sources include the philosophies of existentialism and phenomenology.

## 4.6 See also

- [Alternatives to the Ten Commandments – Secular and humanist alternatives](#)
- [Amsterdam Declaration](#)
- [Anthropocentrism](#)
- [Christian humanism](#)
- [Community organising](#)
- [Extropianism](#)
- [John N. Gray](#)
- [Humanistic psychology](#)
- [List of humanists](#)
- [Materialism](#)
- [Misanthropy](#)
- [Natural rights](#)
- [Objectivity \(philosophy\)](#)
- [Pluralistic Rationalism](#)
- [Post-theism](#)
- [Secular humanism](#)
- [Social psychology](#)
- [Unitarian Universalism](#)
- [Ubuntu](#)

## 4.7 Notes

- [1] [Nicolas Walter's \*Humanism – What's in the Word\*](#) (London: Rationalist Press Association, 1997 ISBN 0-301-97001-7) gives an account of the evolution of the meaning of the word *humanism* from the point of view of a modern secular humanist. A similar perspective, but somewhat less polemical, appears in [Richard Norman's \*On Humanism \(Thinking in Action\)\*](#) (London: Routledge: 2004). For a historical and philologically oriented view, see [Vito Giustiniani's "Homo, Humanus, and the Meanings of Humanism"](#), *Journal of the History of Ideas* 46: 2 (April–June 1985): 167–95.
- [2] See for example the 2002 [Amsterdam Declaration](#) <<http://iheu.org/humanism/the-amsterdam-declaration/>> issued by the [International Humanist and Ethical Union](#)
- [3] The British Humanist Association's definition of Humanism
- [4] [Aulus Gellius](#), *Attic Nights*, XIII: 17.
- [5] [Richard Bauman](#), *Human Rights in Ancient Rome* (Routledge Classical Monographs [1999]), pp. 74–75.
- [6] [Mann, Nicholas](#) (1996). *The Origins of Humanism*. Cambridge University Press. pp. 1–2. The term *umanista* was used, in fifteenth century Italian academic jargon to describe a teacher or student of classical literature including that of grammar and rhetoric. The English equivalent 'humanist' makes its appearance in the late sixteenth century with a similar meaning. Only in the nineteenth century, however, and probably for the first time in [Germany](#) in 1809, is the attribute transformed into a substantive: *humanism*, standing for devotion to the literature of ancient Greece and Rome, and the humane values that may be derived from them.
- [7] *Humanissime vir*, “most humane man”, was the usual Latin way to address scholars. (Giustiniani, “Homo, Humanus, and the Meanings of Humanism” : 168.)
- [8] There was a time when men wandered about in the manner of wild beasts. They conducted their affairs without the least guidance of reason but instead relied on bodily strength. There was no divine religion and the understanding of social duty was in no way cultivated. No one recognized the value inherent in an equitable code of law.(Cicero, *De Inventione*, I. I: 2, quoted in [Quentin Skinner](#), *Visions of Politics, Volume 2: Renaissance Virtues* [Cambridge University Press, 2002], p. 54.)
- [9] A noted authority on the subject, [Paul Oskar Kristeller](#), identified Renaissance humanism as a cultural and literary movement, which in its substance was not philosophical but which had important philosophical implications and consequences.” “I have been unable to discover in the humanist literature any common philosophical doctrine,” he wrote, “except a belief in the value of man and the humanities and in the revival of ancient learning.” (Paul Oskar Kristeller, *Renaissance Thought: The Classic, Scholastic, and Humanist Strains* [New York, Harper and Row, 1961], p. 9). As the late [Jacques Barzun](#) has written:



- The path between the onset of the good letters and the modern humanist as free-thinker or simply as scholar is circuitous but unbroken. If we look for what is common to the Humanists over the centuries we find two things: a body of accepted authors and a method of carrying on study and debate. The two go together with the belief that the best guides to the good life are Reason and Nature. (Jacques Barzun, *From Dawn to Decadence :500 years of Western Cultural Life* [New York: HarperCollins, 2000], p. 45)
- [10] “Genesis of a Humanist Manifesto” . Retrieved 14 May 2006.
- [11] “Text of Humanist Manifesto I” . Americanhumanist.org. Retrieved 13 November 2011.
- [12] Although a distinction has often been drawn between secular and religious humanism, the International Humanist and Ethical Union and similar organizations prefer to describe their life stance without qualification as 'Humanism'. See Nicolas Walter, *Humanism: What's in the Word?* (London: RPA/BHA/Secular Society Ltd, 1937), p. 43.
- [13] Harold Blackham, Levi Fragell, Corliss Lamont, Harry Stopes-Roe, Rob Tielman. “Humanism is Eight Letters, No More” .
- [14] Niethammer's book was entitled *Der Streit des Philanthropinismus und des Humanismus in der Theorie des Erziehungs-Unterrichts unsrer Zeit* (*The Dispute between Philanthropinism and Humanism in the Educational Theory of our Time*), which directly echoes Aulus Gellius's distinction between “philanthropy” and humane learning. Neithammer and other distinguished members of the movement they called “Neo-Humanism” (who included Georg Wilhelm Friedrich Hegel and Friedrich Wilhelm Joseph Schelling and Johann Gottlieb Fichte), felt that the curriculum imposed under Napoleon's occupation of Germany had been excessively oriented toward the practical and vocational. They wished to encourage individuals to practice life-long self cultivation and reflection, based on a study of the artistic, philosophical, and cultural masterpieces of (primarily) Greek civilization.
- [15] As J. A. Symonds remarked, “the word humanism has a German sound and is in fact modern” (See *The Renaissance in Italy* Vol. 2:71 n, 1877). Vito Giustiniani writes that in the German-speaking world “Humanist” while keeping its specific meaning (as scholar of Classical literature) “gave birth to further derivatives, such as *humanistisch* for those schools which later were to be called *humanistische Gymnasien*, with Latin and Greek as the main subjects of teaching (1784). Finally, *Humanismus* was introduced to denote 'classical education in general' (1808) and still later for the epoch and the achievements of the Italian humanists of the fifteenth century (1841). This is to say that 'humanism' for 'classical learning' appeared first in Germany, where it was once and for all sanctioned in this meaning by Georg Voigt (1859)”. (Giustiniani, “Homo, Humanus, and the Meanings of Humanism” : 172.)
- [16] “*L'amour général de l'humanité ... vertu qui n'a point de nom parmi nous et que nous oserions appeler 'humanisme', puisqu'enfin il est temps de créer un mot pour une chose si belle et nécessaire*”; from the review *Ephémérides du citoyen ou Bibliothèque raisonnée des sciences morales et politiques*, Chapter 16 (Dec, 17, 1765): 247, quoted in Giustiniani, “Homo, Humanus, and the Meanings of Humanism” : 175, note 38.
- [17] Although Rousseau himself devoutly believed in a personal God, his book, *Emile: or, On Education*, does attempt to demonstrate that atheists can be virtuous. It was publicly burned. During the Revolution, Jacobins instituted a cult of the Supreme Being along lines suggested by Rousseau. In the 19th-century French positivist philosopher Auguste Comte (1798–1857) founded a “religion of humanity” , whose calendar and catechism echoed the former Revolutionary cult. See Comtism
- [18] *The Oxford English Dictionary*. VII (2nd ed.). Oxford: Clarendon Press. 1989. pp. 474–75.
- [19] “*Ma conviction intime est que la religion de l'avenir sera le pur humanisme, c' est-à-dire le culte de tout ce qui est de l'homme, la vie entière sanctifiée et élève a une valeur moral*” . quoted in Giustiniani, “Homo, Humanus, and the Meanings of Humanism” : 175.
- [20] “Lesson 1: A brief history of humanist thought” . *Introduction to Humanism: A Primer on the History, Philosophy, and Goals of Humanism*. The Continuum of Humanist Education. Retrieved 21 August 2009.
- [21] “Principles of Integral Science of Religion” , By Georg Schmid, p. 109, 'As an Example: Yasna 32:8', p. 109
- [22] “Human Behavior and Good Thinking” .
- [23] Potter, Charles (1930). *Humanism A new Religion*. Simon and Schuster. pp. 64–69.
- [24] Lenn Evan Goodman (2003), *Islamic Humanism*, p. 155, Oxford University Press, ISBN 0-19-513580-6.
- [25] Ahmad, I. A. (3 June 2002). *The Rise and Fall of Islamic Science: The Calendar as a Case Study* (PDF). Faith and Reason: Convergence and Complementarity. Ifrane, Morocco: Al-Akhawayn University. Archived (PDF) from the original on 29 November 2014. Retrieved 31 December 2014.
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- [27] Johnson, Paul (2000). *The Renaissance*. New York: The Modern Library. pp. 32–34 and 37. ISBN 0-679-64086-X.
- [28] Johnson, Paul (2000). *The Renaissance*. New York: The Modern Library. p. 37.
- [29] Following an old engraving; from Alfred Gudeman, *Imagines philologorum: 160 bildnisse...* ( “Portraits of Philologists, 160 prints” ), (Leipzig/Berlin) 1911.



- [30] The influence of Jacob Burckhardt's classic masterpiece of cultural history, *The Civilisation of the Renaissance in Italy* (1860) on subsequent Renaissance historiography is traced in Wallace K. Ferguson's *The Renaissance in Historical Thought: Five Centuries of Historical Interpretation* (1948).
- [31] For example the *Cambridge Dictionary of Philosophy*, adhering to the tenacious 19th-century narrative of the Renaissance as a complete break with the past established in 1860 by Jacob Burckhardt, describes the liberating effects of the re-discovery of classical writings this way:
- Here, one felt no weight of the supernatural pressing on the human mind, demanding homage and allegiance. Humanity—with all its distinct capabilities, talents, worries, problems, possibilities—was the centre of interest. It has been said that medieval thinkers philosophised on their knees, but, bolstered by the new studies, they dared to stand up and to rise to full stature. "Humanism" . *"The Cambridge Dictionary of Philosophy, Second Edition.* Cambridge University Press. 1999.
- [32] "The term *umanista* was associated with the revival of the *studia humanitatis* "which included *grammatica, rhetorica, poetics, historia, and philosophia moralis*, as these terms were understood. Unlike the liberal arts of the eighteenth century, they did not include the visual arts, music, dancing or gardening. The humanities also failed to include the disciplines that were the chief subjects of instruction at the universities during the Later Middle Ages and throughout the Renaissance, such as theology, jurisprudence, and medicine, and the philosophical disciplines other than ethics, such as logic, natural philosophy, and metaphysics. In other words, humanism does not represent, as often believed, the sum total of Renaissance thought and learning, but only a well-defined sector of it. Humanism has its proper domain or home territory in the humanities, whereas all other areas of learning, including philosophy (apart from ethics), followed their own course, largely determined by their medieval tradition and by their steady transformation through new observations, problems, or theories. These disciplines were affected by humanism mainly from the outside and in an indirect way, though often quite strongly" . (Paul Oskar Kristeller, *Humanism*, pp. 113–14, in Charles B. Schmitt, Quentin Skinner (editors), *The Cambridge History of Renaissance Philosophy* [1990].
- [33] See their respective entries in Sir John Hale's *Concise Encyclopaedia of the Italian Renaissance* (Oxford University Press, 1981).
- [34] To later generations, the Dutch humanist, Desiderius Erasmus, epitomised this reconciling tendency). According to the *Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy*, "Enlightenment thinkers remembered Erasmus (not quite accurately) as a precursor of modern intellectual freedom and a foe of both Protestant and Catholic dogmatism" . Erasmus himself was not much interested in the Kabbalah, but several other humanists were, notably Pico della Mirandola. See Christian Kabbalah.)
- [35] Bergin, Thomas; Speake, Jennifer (1987). *The Encyclopedia of the Renaissance*. Oxford: Facts On File Publications. pp. 216–17.
- [36] "Only thirteen of Pico della Mirandola's nine hundred theses were thought theologically objectionable by the papal commission that examined them.... [This] suggests that, in spite of his publicly expressed contempt in his *Apologia* for their intellectual inadequacies, the Curial authorities hardly saw these theses as the work of a dangerous theological modernist like Luther or Calvin. Unorthodox though they were, most of the issues raised in them had been the subject of theological dispute for centuries and the commission ... condemned him not for innovations but for 'reviving several of the errors of gentile philosophers which are already disproved and obsolete'". Davies (1997), p 103.
- [37] Richard H. Popkin (editor), *The Columbia History of Western Philosophy* (1998), pp. 293, 301.
- [38] More than 100 years earlier, Dante in the *Divine Comedy* (c. 1308–1321) had pinpointed the Donation of Constantine (which he accepted as genuine) as a great mistake and the cause of all the political and religious problems of Italy, including the corruption of the Church. Although Dante had thunderously attacked the idea that the Church could have temporal as well as spiritual powers, it remained to Valla to conclusively prove that the legal justification for such powers was spurious.
- [39] Ironically, it was a humanist scholar, Isaac Casaubon, in the 17th century, who would use philology to show that the *Corpus Hermeticum* was not of great antiquity, as had been asserted in the 4th century by Saint Augustine and Lactantius, but dated from the Christian era. See Anthony Grafton, *Defenders of the Text: The Traditions of Scholarship in an Age of Science, 1450–1800* (Harvard University Press, 1991).
- [40] "Humanism" . *Encyclopedic Dictionary of Religion*. F–N. Corpus Publications. 1979. p. 1733. ISBN 0-9602572-1-7. "Renaissance humanists rejoiced in the mutual compatibility of much ancient philosophy and Christian truths" , M. A. Screech, *Laughter at the Foot of the Cross* (1997), p. 13.
- [41] *Homo* in Latin specifically means "human being" , in contrast to *vir*, "man" , and *mulier*, "woman": Annabel Robinson, *The Life and Work of Jane Ellen Harrison* (Oxford University Press, 2002), p. 206; Tore Janson, *A Natural History of Latin* (Oxford University Press, 2004), p. 281; Timothy J. Moore, *Roman Theatre* (Cambridge University Press, 2012), p. 62 (note to the line in Terence); as a "watchword" for humanists, *Humanism and the Humanities in the Twenty-First Century*, edited by William S. Haney and Peter Malekin (Associated University Presses, 2001), p. 171; similar *homo sum* declaration by Seneca, James Ker, *The Deaths of Seneca* (Oxford University Press, 2009), p. 193.
- [42] Bauman, *Human Rights in Ancient Rome*, p. 1.
- [43] A. C. Crombie, *Historians and the Scientific Revolution*, p. 456 in *Science, Art and Nature in Medieval and Modern Thought* (1996).

- [44] Gottlieb, Anthony (2000). *The Dream of Reason: a history of western philosophy from the Greeks to the Renaissance*. New York: W. W. Norton & Company. pp. 410–11.
- [45] Alleby, Brad (2003). “Humanism” . *Encyclopedia of Science & Religion*. 1 (2nd ed.). Macmillan Reference USA. pp. 426–28. ISBN 0-02-865705-5.
- [46] Kristeller, “Humanism” in *The Cambridge History of Renaissance Philosophy*, p. 114.
- [47] Schaeffer, Francis A. *How Should We Then Live?*. Crossway. pp. 146–47. ISBN 978-1581345360.
- [48] Os Guinness, *The Dust of Death: A Critique of the Establishment and the Counter Culture and the Proposal for a Third Way* (Intervarsity Press, 1973) p. 5.
- [49] Schaeffer, Francis A. *How Should We Then Live?*. Crossway. pp. 79–80. ISBN 978-1581345360.
- [50] Tony Davies, *Humanism* (Routledge, 1997) pp. 26–27.
- [51] In *La Condition postmoderne*
- [52] Davies, *Humanism*, p. 27.
- [53] Davies, *Humanism*, p. 28.
- [54] quoted in Davies (1997), p. 27.
- [55] “Comte's secular religion is no vague effusion of humanistic piety, but a complete system of belief and ritual, with liturgy and sacraments, priesthood and pontiff, all organised around the public veneration of Humanity, the *Nouveau Grand-Être Suprême* (New Supreme Great Being), later to be supplemented in a positivist trinity by the *Grand Fétish* (the Earth) and the *Grand Milieu* (Destiny)”. According to Davies (pp. 28–29), Comte's austere and “slightly dispiriting” philosophy of humanity viewed as alone in an indifferent universe (which can only be explained by “positive” science) and with nowhere to turn but to each other, was even more influential in Victorian England than the theories of Charles Darwin or Karl Marx.
- [56] Davies, p. 29.
- [57] Morain, Lloyd; Morain, Mary (2007). *Humanism as the Next Step* (PDF). Washington, D.C.: Humanist Press. p. 109. ISBN 978-0931779091. LCCN 97-74611.
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- [59] “Ethical Culture” (PDF). American Ethical Union. Archived from the original (PDF) on 26 February 2009. Retrieved 23 February 2009.
- [60] Stringer-Hye, Richard. “Charles Francis Potter” . *Dictionary of Unitarian and Universalist Biography*. Unitarian Universalist Historical Society. Retrieved 1 May 2008.
- [61] American Humanist Association Archived 12 August 2002 at the Wayback Machine.
- [62] Craig W. Kallendorf, introduction to *Humanist Educational Treatises*, edited and translated by Craig W. Kallendorf (Cambridge, Massachusetts and London England: The I Tatti Renaissance Library, 2002) p. vii.
- [63] Early Italian humanism, which in many respects continued the grammatical and rhetorical traditions of the Middle Ages, not merely provided the old Trivium with a new and more ambitious name (*Studia humanitatis*), but also increased its actual scope, content and significance in the curriculum of the schools and universities and in its own extensive literary production. The *studia humanitatis* excluded logic, but they added to the traditional grammar and rhetoric not only history, Greek, and moral philosophy, but also made poetry, once a sequel of grammar and rhetoric, the most important member of the whole group. (Paul Oskar Kristeller, *Renaissance Thought II: Papers on Humanism and the Arts* [New York: Harper Torchbooks, 1965], p. 178.)
- See also Kristeller's *Renaissance Thought I*, “Humanism and Scholasticism In the Italian Renaissance” , *Byzantion* 17 (1944–45): 346–74. Reprinted in *Renaissance Thought* (New York: Harper Torchbooks), 1961.
- [64] Vito Giustiniani gives as an example of an out-dated, but still pervasive view, that of Corliss Lamont, who described Renaissance Humanism as, “first and foremost a revolt against the otherworldliness of mediaeval Christianity, a turning away from preoccupation with personal immortality to make the best of life in this world. Renaissance writers like Rabelais and Erasmus gave eloquent voice to this new joy of living and to the sheer exuberance of existence. For the Renaissance the ideal human being was no longer the ascetic monk, but a new type – the universal man the many-sided personality delighting in every kind of this-earthly achievements. The great Italian artists, Leonardo da Vinci and Michelangelo, typified this ideal.” (Giustiniani, “Homo, Humanus, and the Meanings of Humanism”: 192.)
- [65] Edwards, Fred (1989). “What Is Humanism?”. American Humanist Association. Retrieved 19 August 2009. Secular Humanism is an outgrowth of eighteenth century enlightenment rationalism and nineteenth century freethought... Secular and Religious Humanists both share the same worldview and the same basic principles... From the standpoint of philosophy alone, there is no difference between the two. It is only in the definition of religion and in the practice of the philosophy that Religious and Secular Humanists effectively disagree. A decidedly anti-theistic version of secular humanism, however, is developed by Adolf Grünbaum, ‘In Defense of Secular Humanism’ (1995), in his *Collected Works* (edited by Thomas Kupka), vol. I, New York: Oxford University Press 2013, ch. 6 (pp. 115–48)
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- [72] Tony Davies, *Humanism* (Routledge, 1997) p. 48.
- [73] Laurie, Timothy (2015), "Becoming-Animal Is A Trap For Humans" , *Deleuze and the Non-Human* eds. Hannah Stark and Jon Roffe.
- [74] in *Humanism and Anti-humanism (Problems of Modern European Thought)* (La Salle, Illinois: Open Court Press, 1986, p. 128.
- [75] quoted in Davies (1997) p. 49.
- [76] Habermas accepts some criticisms leveled at traditional humanism but believes that humanism must be rethought and revised rather than simply abandoned.
- [77] "The antihumanist Humanism of Heidegger and the humanist antihumanism of Foucault and Althusser" (Davies [1997]), p. 131.
- [78] Davies (1997), pp. 131–32
- [79] "Conscience, the sense of right and wrong and the insistent call of one's better, more idealistic, more social-minded self, is a social product. Feelings of right and wrong that at first have their locus within the family gradually develop into a pattern for the tribe or city, then spread to the larger unit of the nation, and finally from the nation to humanity as a whole. Humanism sees no need for resorting to supernatural explanations, or sanctions at any point in the ethical process" (Lamont, Corliss (1997). *The Philosophy of Humanism, Eighth Edition*. Humanist Press: Amherst, New York. pp. 252–53. ISBN 0-931779-07-3.)
- [80] See for example Kurtz, Paul (2000). *Humanist manifesto 2000 : a call for a new planetary humanism*. Amherst, NY: Prometheus Books. ISBN 157392783X.
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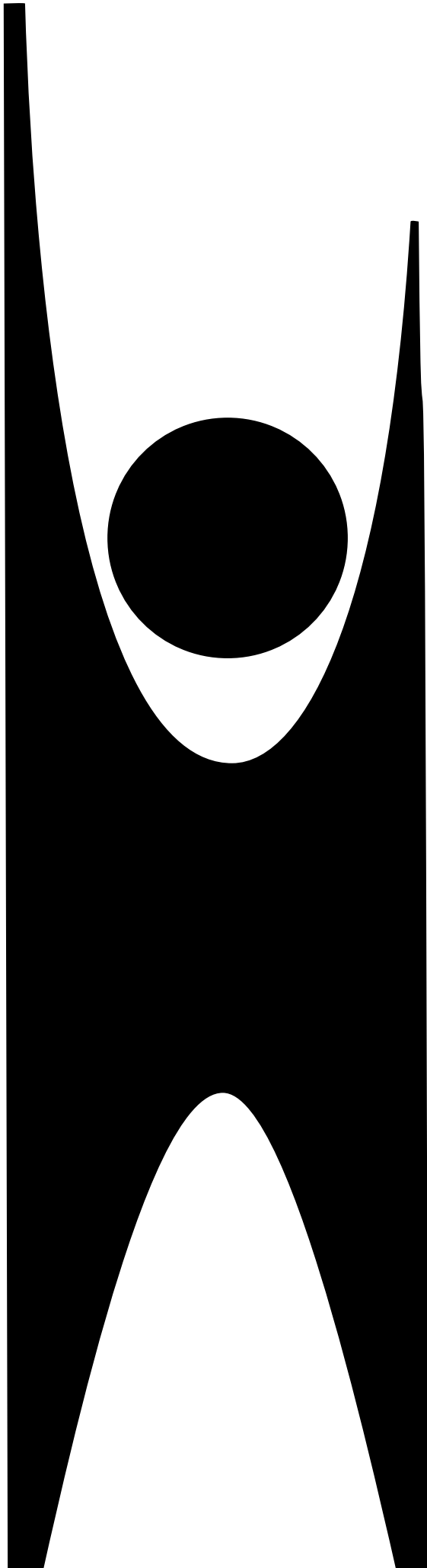
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## 4.9 External links

- "Humanism". *Encyclopædia Britannica*. **13** (11th ed.). 1911.
- *In Our Time* with Melvyn Bragg. Humanism. BBC Radio discussion with Tony Davies, Department of English, University of Birmingham; Lisa Jardine, Professor of Renaissance Studies, Queen Mary College, University of London and Honorary Fellow of Kings College Cambridge; Simon Goldhill, Reader in Greek Literature and Culture at Kings College Cambridge.
- Humanism at the Open Directory Project. A web portal to Humanist Societies.
- *The Philosophy of Humanism* by Corliss Lamont
- *American Humanist Association*
- *International Humanist and Ethical Union*
- *The British Humanist Association*





## Chapter 5

# Atheism

“Atheist” redirects here. For other uses, see [Atheist \(disambiguation\)](#).

**Atheism** is, in the broadest sense, the absence of belief in the existence of deities.<sup>[1][2][3][4]</sup> Less broadly, atheism is the rejection of belief that any deities exist.<sup>[5][6]</sup> In an even narrower sense, atheism is specifically the position that there are no deities.<sup>[1][2][7][8]</sup> Atheism is contrasted with theism,<sup>[9][10]</sup> which, in its most general form, is the belief that at least one deity exists.<sup>[10][11][12]</sup>

The etymological root for the word *atheism* originated before the 5th century BCE from the ancient Greek *ἄθεος* (*atheos*), meaning “without god(s)”. In antiquity it had multiple uses as a pejorative term applied to those thought to reject the gods worshiped by the larger society,<sup>[13]</sup> those who were forsaken by the gods or those who had no commitment to belief in the gods. The term denoted a social category created by orthodox religionists into which those who did not share their religious beliefs were placed.<sup>[14]</sup> The actual term *atheism* emerged first in the 16th century.<sup>[15]</sup> With the spread of freethought, skeptical inquiry, and subsequent increase in criticism of religion, application of the term narrowed in scope. The first individuals to identify themselves using the word *atheist* lived in the 18th century during the Age of Enlightenment.<sup>[16][15]</sup> The French Revolution, noted for its “unprecedented atheism,” witnessed the first major political movement in history to advocate for the supremacy of human reason.<sup>[17]</sup>

Arguments for atheism range from the philosophical to social and historical approaches. Rationales for not believing in deities include arguments that there is a lack of empirical evidence,<sup>[18][19]</sup> the problem of evil; the argument from inconsistent revelations, the rejection of concepts that cannot be falsified, and the argument from nonbelief.<sup>[18][20]</sup> Although some atheists have adopted secular philosophies (e.g. secular humanism),<sup>[21][22]</sup> there is no one ideology or set of behaviors to which all atheists adhere.<sup>[23]</sup> Atheism is a more parsimonious position than theism and is the position in which everyone is born; therefore it has been argued that the burden of proof lies not on the atheist to disprove the existence of God but on the theist to provide a rationale

for theism.<sup>[24][1]</sup>

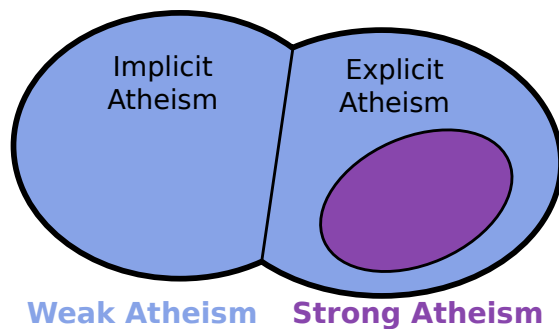
Since conceptions of atheism vary, accurate estimations of current numbers of atheists are difficult.<sup>[25]</sup> Two global polls on the subject have been conducted by WIN/Gallup International: their 2015 poll featured over 64,000 respondents and indicated that 11% were “convinced atheists” whereas an earlier 2012 poll found that 13% of respondents were “convinced atheists.”<sup>[26][27]</sup> However, other researchers have advised caution with WIN/Gallup figures since other surveys which have used the same wording for decades and have a bigger sample size; have consistently reached lower figures.<sup>[28]</sup> An older survey by the British Broadcasting Corporation (BBC) in 2004 recorded atheists as comprising 8% of the world's population.<sup>[29]</sup> Other older estimates have indicated that atheists comprise 2% of the world's population, while the irreligious add a further 12%.<sup>[30]</sup> According to these polls, Europe and East Asia are the regions with the highest rates of atheism. In 2015, 61% of people in China reported that they were atheists.<sup>[31]</sup> The figures for a 2010 Eurobarometer survey in the European Union (EU) reported that 20% of the EU population claimed not to believe in “any sort of spirit, God or life force”.<sup>[32]</sup>

## 5.1 Definitions and types

Writers disagree on how best to define and classify *atheism*,<sup>[33]</sup> contesting what supernatural entities are considered gods, whether it is a philosophic position in its own right or merely the absence of one, and whether it requires a conscious, explicit rejection. Atheism has been regarded as compatible with agnosticism,<sup>[34][35][36][37][38][39][40]</sup> and has also been contrasted with it.<sup>[41][42][43]</sup> A variety of categories have been used to distinguish the different forms of atheism.

### 5.1.1 Range

Some of the ambiguity and controversy involved in defining *atheism* arises from difficulty in reaching a consensus for the definitions of words like *deity* and *god*. The plu-



A diagram showing the relationship between the definitions of weak/strong and implicit/explicit atheism.

Explicit strong/positive/hard atheists (in **purple** on the **right**) assert that “at least one deity exists” is a false statement.

Explicit weak/negative/soft atheists (in **blue** on the **right**) reject or eschew belief that any deities exist without actually asserting that “at least one deity exists” is a false statement.

Implicit weak/negative atheists (in **blue** on the **left**), according to authors such as George H. Smith, would include people (such as young children and some agnostics) who do not believe in a deity but have not explicitly rejected such belief.

(Sizes in the diagram are not meant to indicate relative sizes within a population.)

ality of wildly different conceptions of God and deities leads to differing ideas regarding atheism's applicability. The ancient Romans accused Christians of being atheists for not worshiping the pagan deities. Gradually, this view fell into disfavor as *theism* came to be understood as encompassing belief in any divinity.\*[44]

With respect to the range of phenomena being rejected, atheism may counter anything from the existence of a deity, to the existence of any spiritual, supernatural, or transcendental concepts, such as those of Buddhism, Hinduism, Jainism, and Taoism.\*[45]

### 5.1.2 Implicit vs. explicit

Main article: Implicit and explicit atheism

Definitions of atheism also vary in the degree of consideration a person must put to the idea of gods to be considered an atheist. Atheism has sometimes been defined to include the simple absence of belief that any deities exist. This broad definition would include newborns and other people who have not been exposed to theistic ideas. As far back as 1772, Baron d'Holbach said that “All children are born Atheists; they have no idea of God.”\*[46] Similarly, George H. Smith (1979) suggested that: “The man who is unacquainted with theism is an atheist because he does not believe in a god. This category would also include the child with the conceptual capacity to grasp the issues involved, but who is still unaware of those issues. The fact that this child does not believe in god qualifies him as an atheist.”\*[47] Smith coined the term *implicit atheism* to refer to “the absence of theistic belief without

a conscious rejection of it” and *explicit atheism* to refer to the more common definition of conscious disbelief. Ernest Nagel contradicts Smith's definition of atheism as merely “absence of theism”, acknowledging only explicit atheism as true “atheism”.\*[48]

### 5.1.3 Positive vs. negative

Main article: Negative and positive atheism

Philosophers such as Antony Flew\*[49] and Michael Martin\*[44] have contrasted positive (strong/hard) atheism with negative (weak/soft) atheism. Positive atheism is the explicit affirmation that gods do not exist. Negative atheism includes all other forms of non-theism. According to this categorization, anyone who is not a theist is either a negative or a positive atheist. The terms *weak* and *strong* are relatively recent, while the terms *negative* and *positive* atheism are of older origin, having been used (in slightly different ways) in the philosophical literature\*[49] and in Catholic apologetics.\*[50] Under this demarcation of atheism, most agnostics qualify as negative atheists.

While Martin, for example, asserts that agnosticism entails negative atheism,\*[37] many agnostics see their view as distinct from atheism,\*[51]\*[52] which they may consider no more justified than theism or requiring an equal conviction.\*[51] The assertion of unattainability of knowledge for or against the existence of gods is sometimes seen as an indication that atheism requires a *leap of faith*.\*[53]\*[54] Common atheist responses to this argument include that unproven *religious* propositions deserve as much disbelief as all other unproven propositions,\*[55] and that the unprovability of a god's existence does not imply equal probability of either possibility.\*[56] Scottish philosopher J. J. C. Smart even argues that “sometimes a person who is really an atheist may describe herself, even passionately, as an agnostic because of unreasonable generalized philosophical skepticism which would preclude us from saying that we know anything whatever, except perhaps the truths of mathematics and formal logic.”\*[57] Consequently, some atheist authors such as Richard Dawkins prefer distinguishing theist, agnostic and atheist positions along a *spectrum of theistic probability*—the likelihood that each assigns to the statement “God exists”.\*[58]

### 5.1.4 Definition as impossible or impermanent

Before the 18th century, the existence of God was so accepted in the western world that even the possibility of true atheism was questioned. This is called *theistic immatism*—the notion that all people believe in God from birth; within this view was the connotation that atheists are simply in denial.\*[59]

There is also a position claiming that atheists are quick to believe in God in times of crisis, that atheists make deathbed conversions, or that “there are no atheists in foxholes”. \* [60] There have however been examples to the contrary, among them examples of literal “atheists in foxholes”. \* [61]

Some atheists have doubted the very need for the term “atheism”. In his book *Letter to a Christian Nation*, Sam Harris wrote:

In fact, “atheism” is a term that should not even exist. No one ever needs to identify himself as a “non-astrologer” or a “non-alchemist”. We do not have words for people who doubt that Elvis is still alive or that aliens have traversed the galaxy only to molest ranchers and their cattle. Atheism is nothing more than the noises reasonable people make in the presence of unjustified religious beliefs. \* [62]

### 5.1.5 Pragmatic atheism

Pragmatic atheism is the view one should reject a belief in a god or gods because it is unnecessary for a pragmatic life. This view is related to apatheism and practical atheism. \* [63]

## 5.2 Arguments

### 5.2.1 Ontological arguments

Atheists have put forward arguments against the existence of gods, responding to common theistic arguments such as the argument from design or Pascal's Wager.

### 5.2.2 Epistemological arguments

Further information: Agnostic atheism and Theological noncognitivism

Atheists have also argued that people cannot know a God or prove the existence of a God. The later is called agnosticism, which takes a variety of forms. In the philosophy of immanence, divinity is inseparable from the world itself, including a person's mind, and each person's consciousness is locked in the subject. According to this form of agnosticism, this limitation in perspective prevents any objective inference from belief in a god to assertions of its existence. The rationalistic agnosticism of Kant and the Enlightenment only accepts knowledge deduced with human rationality; this form of atheism holds that gods are not discernible as a matter of principle, and therefore cannot be known to exist. Skepticism, based on the ideas of Hume, asserts that certainty about anything



*Paul Henri Thiry, Baron d'Holbach, an 18th-century advocate of atheism.*

*The source of man's unhappiness is his ignorance of Nature. The pertinacity with which he clings to blind opinions imbibed in his infancy, which interweave themselves with his existence, the consequent prejudice that warps his mind, that prevents its expansion, that renders him the slave of fiction, appears to doom him to continual error.*

—d'Holbach, *The System of Nature* \* [64]

is impossible, so one can never know for sure whether or not a god exists. Hume, however, held that such unobservable metaphysical concepts should be rejected as “sophistry and illusion”. \* [65] The allocation of agnosticism to atheism is disputed; it can also be regarded as an independent, basic worldview. \* [66]

Other arguments for atheism that can be classified as epistemological or ontological, including ignosticism, assert the meaninglessness or unintelligibility of basic terms such as “God” and statements such as “God is all-powerful.” Theological noncognitivism holds that the statement “God exists” does not express a proposition, but is nonsensical or cognitively meaningless. It has been argued both ways as to whether such individuals can be classified into some form of atheism or agnosticism. Philosophers A. J. Ayer and Theodore M. Drange reject both categories, stating that both camps accept “God exists” as a proposition; they instead place noncognitivism in its own category. \* [67] \* [68]

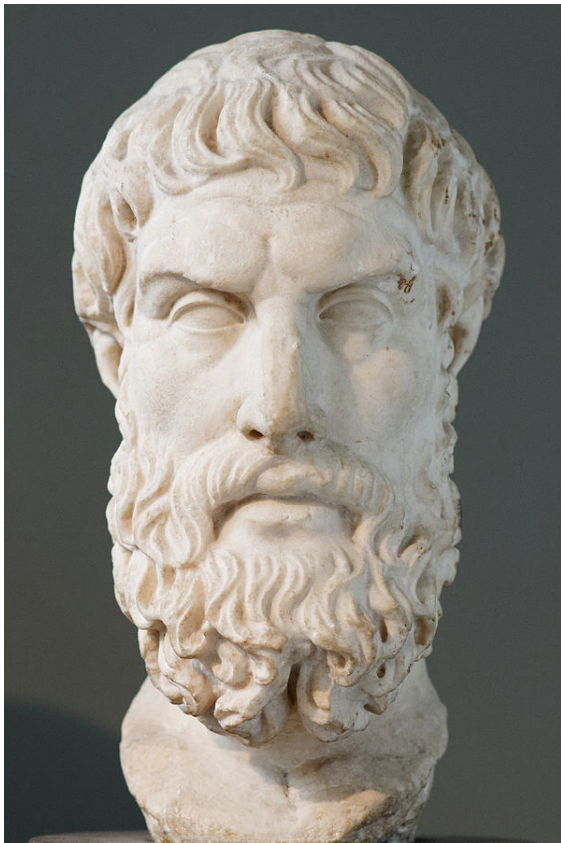


### 5.2.3 Metaphysical arguments

Further information: **Monism and Physicalism**

Philosopher, Zofia Zdybicka writes:

“Metaphysical atheism ... includes all doctrines that hold to metaphysical monism (the homogeneity of reality). Metaphysical atheism may be either: a) absolute —an explicit denial of God's existence associated with materialistic monism (all materialistic trends, both in ancient and modern times); b) relative —the implicit denial of God in all philosophies that, while they accept the existence of an absolute, conceive of the absolute as not possessing any of the attributes proper to God: transcendence, a personal character or unity. Relative atheism is associated with idealistic monism (pantheism, panentheism, deism).” \* [69]



*Epicurus is credited with first expounding the problem of evil. David Hume in his Dialogues concerning Natural Religion (1779) cited Epicurus in stating the argument as a series of questions: [70] “Is God willing to prevent evil, but not able? Then he is impotent. Is he able, but not willing? Then he is malevolent. Is he both able and willing? Then whence cometh evil? Is he neither able nor willing? Then why call him God?”*

### 5.2.4 Logical arguments

Further information: **Arguments against the existence of God, Problem of evil, and Divine hiddenness**

Some atheists hold the view that the various conceptions of gods, such as the **personal god** of Christianity, are ascribed logically inconsistent qualities. Such atheists present **deductive arguments** against the existence of God, which assert the incompatibility between certain traits, such as perfection, creator-status, immutability, omniscience, omnipresence, omnipotence, omnibenevolence, transcendence, personhood (a personal being), nonphysicality, justice, and mercy. \* [18]

**Theodicean** atheists believe that the world as they experience it cannot be reconciled with the qualities commonly ascribed to God and gods by theologians. They argue that an **omniscient, omnipotent, and omnibenevolent** God is not compatible with a world where there is **evil** and **suffering**, and where divine love is hidden from many people. \* [20] A similar argument is attributed to Siddhartha Gautama, the founder of **Buddhism**. \* [71]

### 5.2.5 Reductionary accounts of religion

Further information: **Evolutionary origin of religions, Evolutionary psychology of religion, and Psychology of religion**

Philosopher Ludwig Feuerbach \* [72] and psychoanalyst Sigmund Freud have argued that God and other religious beliefs are human inventions, created to fulfill various psychological and emotional wants or needs. This is also a view of many **Buddhists**. \* [73] Karl Marx and Friedrich Engels, influenced by the work of Feuerbach, argued that belief in God and religion are social functions, used by those in power to oppress the working class. According to Mikhail Bakunin, “the idea of God implies the abdication of human reason and justice; it is the most decisive negation of human liberty, and necessarily ends in the enslavement of mankind, in theory and practice.” He reversed Voltaire's famous aphorism that if God did not exist, it would be necessary to invent him, writing instead that “if God really existed, it would be necessary to abolish him.” \* [74]

### 5.2.6 Atheism, religions and spirituality

Further information: **Nontheistic religions**

Atheism is coherent with some religious and spiritual belief systems, including **Hinduism, Jainism, Buddhism, Syntheism, Raëlism**, \* [75] and Neopagan movements \* [76] such as Wicca. \* [77] Āstika schools in **Hinduism** hold atheism to be a valid path to moksha,

but extremely difficult, for the atheist can not expect any help from the divine on their journey.\*[78] Jainism believes the universe is eternal and has no need for a creator deity, however Tirthankaras are revered that can transcend space and time\*[79] and have more power than the god Indra.\*[80] Secular Buddhism does not advocate belief in gods. Early Buddhism was atheistic as Gautama Buddha's path involved no mention of gods. Later conceptions of Buddhism consider Buddha himself a god, suggest adherents can attain godhood, and revere Bodhisattvas\*[81] and Eternal Buddha.

### 5.2.7 Atheism and negative theology

Further information: Atheism and negative theology

Apophatic theology is often accused of being a version of atheism or agnosticism, since it cannot say truly that God exists.\*[82] “The comparison is crude, however, for conventional atheism treats the existence of God as a predicate that can be denied ( “God is nonexistent” ), whereas negative theology denies that God has predicates”.\*[83] “God or the Divine is” without being able to attribute qualities about “what He is” would be the prerequisite of positive theology in negative theology that distinguishes theism from atheism. “Negative theology is a complement to, not the enemy of, positive theology”.\*[84]

## 5.3 Atheistic philosophies

Further information: Atheist existentialism and Secular humanism

Axiological, or constructive, atheism rejects the existence of gods in favor of a “higher absolute”, such as humanity. This form of atheism favors humanity as the absolute source of ethics and values, and permits individuals to resolve moral problems without resorting to God. Marx and Freud used this argument to convey messages of liberation, full-development, and unfettered happiness.\*[66] One of the most common criticisms of atheism has been to the contrary—that denying the existence of a god leads to moral relativism, leaving one with no moral or ethical foundation,\*[85] or renders life meaningless and miserable.\*[86] Blaise Pascal argued this view in his *Pensées*.\*[87]

French philosopher Jean-Paul Sartre identified himself as a representative of an “atheist existentialism”\*[88] concerned less with denying the existence of God than with establishing that “man needs ... to find himself again and to understand that nothing can save him from himself, not even a valid proof of the existence of God.”\*[89] Sartre said a corollary of his atheism was that “if God does not exist, there is at least one being in whom existence

precedes essence, a being who exists before he can be defined by any concept, and ... this being is man.”\*[88] The practical consequence of this atheism was described by Sartre as meaning that there are no *a priori* rules or absolute values that can be invoked to govern human conduct, and that humans are “condemned” to invent these for themselves, making “man” absolutely “responsible for everything he does”.\*[90]

## 5.4 Atheism, religion, and morality

See also: Atheism and religion, Criticism of atheism, Secular ethics, and Secular morality

### 5.4.1 Association with world views and social behaviors

Sociologist Phil Zuckerman analyzed previous social science research on secularity and non-belief, and concluded that societal well-being is positively correlated with irreligion. He found that there are much lower concentrations of atheism and secularity in poorer, less developed nations (particularly in Africa and South America) than in the richer industrialized democracies.\*[91]\*[92] His findings relating specifically to atheism in the US were that compared to religious people in the US, “atheists and secular people” are less nationalistic, prejudiced, antisemitic, racist, dogmatic, ethnocentric, closed-minded, and authoritarian, and in US states with the highest percentages of atheists, the murder rate is lower than average. In the most religious states, the murder rate is higher than average.\*[93]\*[94]

### 5.4.2 Atheism and irreligion

People who self-identify as atheists are often assumed to be irreligious, but some sects within major religions reject the existence of a personal, creator deity.\*[96] In recent years, certain religious denominations have accumulated a number of openly atheistic followers, such as atheistic or humanistic Judaism\*[97]\*[98] and Christian atheists.\*[99]\*[100]\*[101]

The strictest sense of positive atheism does not entail any specific beliefs outside of disbelief in any deity; as such, atheists can hold any number of spiritual beliefs. For the same reason, atheists can hold a wide variety of ethical beliefs, ranging from the moral universalism of humanism, which holds that a moral code should be applied consistently to all humans, to moral nihilism, which holds that morality is meaningless.\*[102]

Philosophers such as Slavoj Žižek,\*[103] Alain de Botton,\*[104] and Alexander Bard and Jan Söderqvist,\*[105] have all argued that atheists should reclaim religion as an





*Buddhism is sometimes described as nontheistic because of the absence of a creator god, but that can be too simplistic a view.\*[95]*

act of defiance against theism, precisely not to leave religion as an unwarranted monopoly to theists.

### 5.4.3 Divine command

According to Plato's *Euthyphro* dilemma, the role of the gods in determining right from wrong is either unnecessary or arbitrary. The argument that morality must be derived from God, and cannot exist without a wise creator, has been a persistent feature of political if not so much philosophical debate.\*[106]\*[107]\*[108] Moral precepts such as “murder is wrong” are seen as *divine laws*, requiring a divine lawmaker and judge. However, many atheists argue that treating morality legalistically involves a *false analogy*, and that morality does not depend on a lawmaker in the same way that laws do.\*[109] Friedrich Nietzsche believed in a morality independent of theistic belief, and stated that morality based upon God “has truth only if God is truth—it stands or falls with faith in God.”\*[110]\*[111]\*[112]

There exist *normative ethical* systems that do not require principles and rules to be given by a deity. Some include *virtue ethics*, *social contract*, *Kantian ethics*, *utilitarianism*, and *Objectivism*. Sam Harris has proposed that moral prescription (ethical rule making) is not just an

issue to be explored by philosophy, but that we can meaningfully practice a *science of morality*. Any such scientific system must, nevertheless, respond to the criticism embodied in the *naturalistic fallacy*.\*[113]

Philosophers Susan Neiman\*[114] and Julian Baggini\*[115] (among others) assert that behaving ethically only because of divine mandate is not true ethical behavior but merely blind obedience. Baggini argues that atheism is a superior basis for ethics, claiming that a moral basis external to religious imperatives is necessary to evaluate the morality of the imperatives themselves—to be able to discern, for example, that “thou shalt steal” is immoral even if one's religion instructs it—and that atheists, therefore, have the advantage of being more inclined to make such evaluations.\*[116] The contemporary British political philosopher Martin Cohen has offered the more historically telling example of Biblical injunctions in favor of torture and slavery as evidence of how religious injunctions follow political and social customs, rather than vice versa, but also noted that the same tendency seems to be true of supposedly dispassionate and objective philosophers.\*[117] Cohen extends this argument in more detail in *Political Philosophy from Plato to Mao*, where he argues that the Qur'an played a role in perpetuating social codes from the early 7th century despite changes in secular society.\*[118]

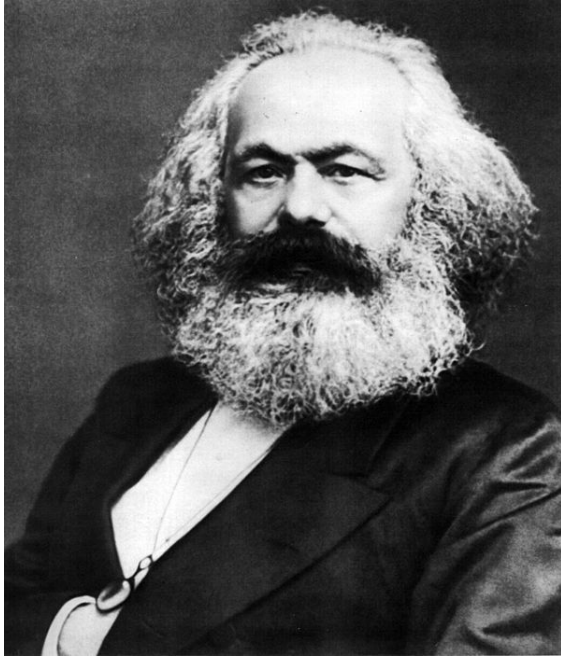
### 5.4.4 Criticism of religion

See also: *Criticism of religion*

Some prominent atheists—most recently Christopher Hitchens, Daniel Dennett, Sam Harris, and Richard Dawkins, and following such thinkers as Bertrand Russell, Robert G. Ingersoll, Voltaire, and novelist José Saramago—have criticized religions, citing harmful aspects of religious practices and doctrines.\*[119]

The 19th-century German political theorist and sociologist Karl Marx called religion “the sigh of the oppressed creature, the heart of a heartless world, and the soul of soulless conditions. It is the *opium of the people*”. He goes on to say, “The abolition of religion as the illusory happiness of the people is the demand for their real happiness. To call on them to give up their illusions about their condition is to call on them to give up a condition that requires illusions. The criticism of religion is, therefore, in embryo, the criticism of that vale of tears of which religion is the halo.”\*[120] Lenin said that “every religious idea and every idea of God is unutterable vileness ... of the most dangerous kind, 'contagion' of the most abominable kind. Millions of sins, filthy deeds, acts of violence and physical contagions ... are far less dangerous than the subtle, spiritual idea of God decked out in the smartest ideological costumes ...”\*[121]

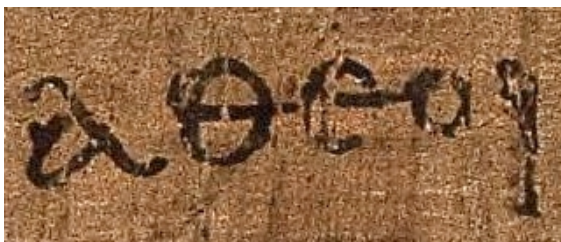
Sam Harris criticizes Western religion's reliance on divine authority as lending itself to *authoritarianism*



Karl Marx

and dogmatism.\*[122] There is a correlation between religious fundamentalism and extrinsic religion (when religion is held because it serves ulterior interests)\*[123] and authoritarianism, dogmatism, and prejudice.\*[124] These arguments—combined with historical events that are argued to demonstrate the dangers of religion, such as the Crusades, inquisitions, witch trials, and terrorist attacks—have been used in response to claims of beneficial effects of belief in religion.\*[125] Believers counter-argue that some regimes that espouse atheism, such as the Soviet Union, have also been guilty of mass murder.\*[126]\*[127] In response to those claims, atheists such as Sam Harris and Richard Dawkins have stated that Stalin's atrocities were influenced not by atheism but by dogmatic Marxism, and that while Stalin and Mao happened to be atheists, they did not do their deeds in the name of atheism.\*[128]\*[129]

## 5.5 Etymology



The Greek word *αθεοι* (atheoi), as it appears in the *Epistle to the Ephesians* (2:12) on the early 3rd-century Papyrus 46. It is usually translated into English as "[those who are] without God" .\*[130]

In early ancient Greek, the adjective *átheos* (ἄθεος, from the privative *ἀ-* + *θεός* "god") meant "godless". It was first used as a term of censure roughly meaning "ungodly" or "impious". In the 5th century BCE, the word began to indicate more deliberate and active godlessness in the sense of "severing relations with the gods" or "denying the gods". The term *ἄσεβής* (*asebēs*) then came to be applied against those who impiously denied or disrespected the local gods, even if they believed in other gods. Modern translations of classical texts sometimes render *átheos* as "atheistic". As an abstract noun, there was also *ἀθεότης* (*atheotēs*), "atheism". Cicero transliterated the Greek word into the Latin *átheos*. The term found frequent use in the debate between early Christians and Hellenists, with each side attributing it, in the pejorative sense, to the other.\*[13]

The term *atheist* (from Fr. *athée*), in the sense of "one who ... denies the existence of God or gods",\*[131] predates *atheism* in English, being first found as early as 1566,\*[132] and again in 1571.\*[133] *Atheist* as a label of practical godlessness was used at least as early as 1577.\*[134] The term *atheism* was derived from the French *athéisme*,\*[135] and appears in English about 1587.\*[136] An earlier work, from about 1534, used the term *atheonism*.\*[137]\*[138] Related words emerged later: *deist* in 1621,\*[139] *theist* in 1662,\*[140] *deism* in 1675,\*[141] and *theism* in 1678.\*[142] At that time "deist" and "deism" already carried their modern meaning. The term *theism* came to be contrasted with deism.

Karen Armstrong writes that "During the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, the word 'atheist' was still reserved exclusively for polemic ... The term 'atheist' was an insult. Nobody would have dreamed of calling *himself* an atheist."\*[16]

*Atheism* was first used to describe a self-avowed belief in late 18th-century Europe, specifically denoting disbelief in the monotheistic Abrahamic god.\*[143] In the 20th century, globalization contributed to the expansion of the term to refer to disbelief in all deities, though it remains common in Western society to describe atheism as simply "disbelief in God" .\*[44]

## 5.6 History

Main article: History of atheism

While the earliest-found usage of the term *atheism* is in 16th-century France,\*[135]\*[136] ideas that would be recognized today as atheistic are documented from the Vedic period and the classical antiquity.



### 5.6.1 Early Indic religion

Main article: [Atheism in Hinduism](#)

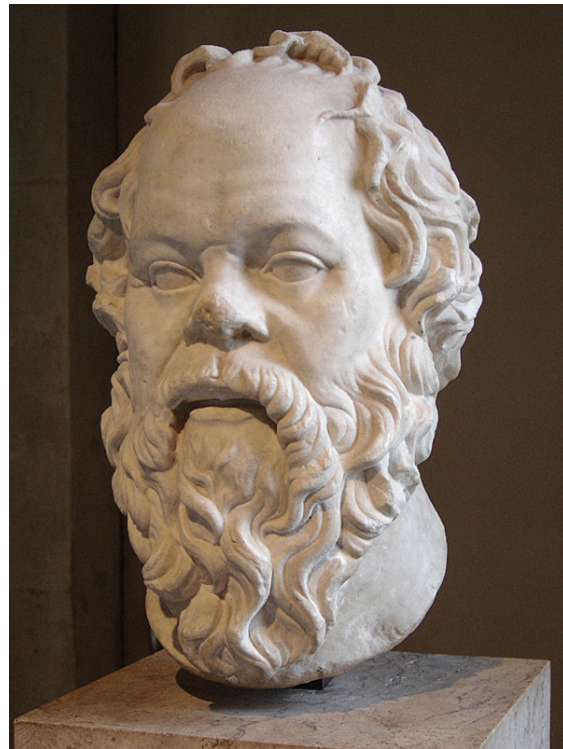
Atheistic schools are found in early Indian thought and have existed from the times of the [historical Vedic religion](#).<sup>\*[144]</sup> Among the six [orthodox](#) schools of Hindu philosophy, [Samkhya](#), the oldest philosophical school of thought, does not accept God, and the early [Mimamsa](#) also rejected the notion of God.<sup>\*[145]</sup> The thoroughly materialistic and anti-theistic philosophical [Cārvāka](#) (or [Lokāyata](#)) school that originated in [India](#) around the 6th century BCE is probably the most explicitly atheistic school of philosophy in India, similar to the Greek [Cyrenaic school](#). This branch of Indian philosophy is classified as [heterodox](#) due to its rejection of the authority of [Vedas](#) and hence is not considered part of the six orthodox schools of Hinduism, but it is noteworthy as evidence of a materialistic movement within Hinduism.<sup>\*[146]</sup> Chatterjee and Datta explain that our understanding of Cārvāka philosophy is fragmentary, based largely on criticism of the ideas by other schools, and that it is not a living tradition:

“Though [materialism](#) in some form or other has always been present in India, and occasional references are found in the Vedas, the Buddhistic literature, the Epics, as well as in the later philosophical works we do not find any systematic work on materialism, nor any organized school of followers as the other philosophical schools possess. But almost every work of the other schools states, for refutation, the materialistic views. Our knowledge of Indian materialism is chiefly based on these.”<sup>\*[147]</sup>

Other Indian philosophies generally regarded as atheistic include [Classical Samkhya](#) and [Purva Mimamsa](#). The rejection of a personal creator God is also seen in [Jainism](#) and [Buddhism](#) in India.<sup>\*[148]</sup>

### 5.6.2 Classical antiquity

Western atheism has its roots in [pre-Socratic Greek philosophy](#), but did not emerge as a distinct world-view until the late [Enlightenment](#).<sup>\*[149]</sup> The 5th-century BCE Greek philosopher [Diagoras](#) is known as the “first atheist”,<sup>\*[150]</sup> and is cited as such by [Cicero](#) in his *De Natura Deorum*.<sup>\*[151]</sup> Atomists such as [Democritus](#) attempted to explain the world in a purely materialistic way, without reference to the spiritual or mystical. [Critias](#) viewed religion as a human invention used to frighten people into following moral order<sup>\*[152]</sup> and [Prodicus](#) also appears to have made clear atheistic statements in his work. [Philodemus](#) reports that Prodicus believed that “the gods



*In Plato's Apology, Socrates (pictured) was accused by Meletus of not believing in the gods.*

of popular belief do not exist nor do they know, but primitive man, [out of admiration, deified] the fruits of the earth and virtually everything that contributed to his existence” . Protagoras has sometimes been taken to be an atheist but rather espoused agnostic views, commenting that “Concerning the gods I am unable to discover whether they exist or not, or what they are like in form; for there are many hindrances to knowledge, the obscurity of the subject and the brevity of human life.”<sup>\*[153]</sup> In the 3rd-century BCE the Greek philosophers [Theodorus Cyrenaicus](#)<sup>\*[151]</sup><sup>\*[154]</sup> and [Strato of Lampsacus](#)<sup>\*[155]</sup> did not believe in the existence of gods.

Socrates (c. 470–399 BCE) was associated in the Athenian public mind with the trends in pre-Socratic philosophy towards naturalistic inquiry and the rejection of divine explanations for phenomena. Although such an interpretation misrepresents his thought he was portrayed in such a way in [Aristophanes'](#) comic play *Clouds* and was later to be tried and executed for impiety and corrupting the young. At his trial Socrates is reported as vehemently denying that he was an atheist and contemporary scholarship provides little reason to doubt this claim.<sup>\*[156]</sup><sup>\*[157]</sup>

[Euhemerus](#) (c. 300 BCE) published his view that the gods were only the deified rulers, conquerors and founders of the past, and that their cults and religions were in essence the continuation of vanished kingdoms and earlier political structures.<sup>\*[158]</sup> Although not strictly an atheist, Euhemerus was later criticized for having “spread atheism

over the whole inhabited earth by obliterating the gods” .\*[159]

Also important in the history of atheism was Epicurus (c. 300 BCE). Drawing on the ideas of Democritus and the Atomists, he espoused a materialistic philosophy according to which the universe was governed by the laws of chance without the need for divine intervention (see *scientific determinism*). Although he stated that deities existed, he believed that they were uninterested in human existence. The aim of the Epicureans was to attain peace of mind and one important way of doing this was by exposing fear of divine wrath as irrational. The Epicureans also denied the existence of an afterlife and the need to fear divine punishment after death.\*[160]

The Roman philosopher Sextus Empiricus held that one should suspend judgment about virtually all beliefs—a form of skepticism known as *Pyrrhonism*—that nothing was inherently evil, and that *ataraxia* (“peace of mind”) is attainable by withholding one’s judgment. His relatively large volume of surviving works had a lasting influence on later philosophers.\*[161]

The meaning of “atheist” changed over the course of classical antiquity. The early Christians were labeled atheists by non-Christians because of their disbelief in pagan gods.\*[162] During the Roman Empire, Christians were executed for their rejection of the Roman gods in general and Emperor-worship in particular. When Christianity became the state religion of Rome under Theodosius I in 381, *heresy* became a punishable offense.\*[163]

### 5.6.3 Early Middle Ages to the Renaissance

During the Early Middle Ages, the Islamic world underwent a *Golden Age*. With the associated advances in science and philosophy, Arab and Persian lands produced outspoken rationalists and atheists, including Muhammad al Warraq (fl. 9th century), Ibn al-Rawandi (827–911), Al-Razi (854–925), and Al-Ma’arri (973–1058). Al-Ma’arri wrote and taught that religion itself was a “fable invented by the ancients” \*[164] and that humans were “of two sorts: those with brains, but no religion, and those with religion, but no brains.” \*[165] Despite being relatively prolific writers, nearly none of their writing survives to the modern day, most of what little remains being preserved through quotations and excerpts in later works by Muslim apologists attempting to refute them.\*[166] Other prominent Golden Age scholars have been associated with rationalist thought and atheism as well, although the current intellectual atmosphere in the Islamic world, and the scant evidence that survives from the era, make this point a contentious one today.

In Europe, the espousal of atheistic views was rare during the Early Middle Ages and Middle Ages (see *Medieval Inquisition*); metaphysics and theology were the dominant interests pertaining to religion.\*[167] There were, how-

ever, movements within this period that furthered heterodox conceptions of the Christian god, including differing views of the nature, transcendence, and knowability of God. Individuals and groups such as Johannes Scotus Eriugena, David of Dinant, Amalric of Bena, and the Brethren of the Free Spirit maintained Christian viewpoints with pantheistic tendencies. Nicholas of Cusa held to a form of fideism he called *docta ignorantia* (“learned ignorance”), asserting that God is beyond human categorization, and thus our knowledge of him is limited to conjecture. William of Ockham inspired anti-metaphysical tendencies with his nominalistic limitation of human knowledge to singular objects, and asserted that the divine essence could not be intuitively or rationally apprehended by human intellect. Followers of Ockham, such as John of Mirecourt and Nicholas of Autrecourt furthered this view. The resulting division between faith and reason influenced later radical and reformist theologians such as John Wycliffe, Jan Hus, and Martin Luther.\*[167]

The Renaissance did much to expand the scope of free thought and skeptical inquiry. Individuals such as Leonardo da Vinci sought experimentation as a means of explanation, and opposed arguments from religious authority. Other critics of religion and the Church during this time included Niccolò Machiavelli, Bonaventure des Périers, Michel de Montaigne, and François Rabelais.\*[161]

### 5.6.4 Early modern period

Historian Geoffrey Blainey wrote that the Reformation had paved the way for atheists by attacking the authority of the Catholic Church, which in turn “quietly inspired other thinkers to attack the authority of the new Protestant churches” .\*[168] Deism gained influence in France, Prussia, and England. The philosopher Baruch Spinoza was “probably the first well known ‘semi-atheist’ to announce himself in a Christian land in the modern era”, according to Blainey. Spinoza believed that natural laws explained the workings of the universe. In 1661 he published his *Short Treatise on God*.\*[169]

Criticism of Christianity became increasingly frequent in the 17th and 18th centuries, especially in France and England, where there appears to have been a religious *malaise*, according to contemporary sources. Some Protestant thinkers, such as Thomas Hobbes, espoused a materialist philosophy and skepticism toward supernatural occurrences, while Spinoza rejected divine providence in favor of a pantheistic naturalism. By the late 17th century, deism came to be openly espoused by intellectuals such as John Toland who coined the term “pantheist” .\*[170]

The first known explicit atheist was the German critic of religion Matthias Knutzen in his three writings of 1674.\*[171] He was followed by two other explicit athe-



ist writers, the Polish ex-Jesuit philosopher **Kazimierz Łyszczyński** and in the 1720s by the French priest **Jean Meslier**.<sup>[172]</sup> In the course of the 18th century, other openly atheistic thinkers followed, such as **Baron d'Holbach**, **Jacques-André Naigeon**, and other **French materialists**.<sup>[173]</sup> **John Locke** in contrast, though an advocate of tolerance, urged authorities not to tolerate atheism, believing that the denial of God's existence would undermine the social order and lead to chaos.<sup>[174]</sup>

The philosopher **David Hume** developed a skeptical epistemology grounded in **empiricism**, and **Immanuel Kant's** philosophy has strongly questioned the very possibility of a metaphysical knowledge. Both philosophers undermined the metaphysical basis of natural theology and criticized classical arguments for the existence of God.



*Ludwig Feuerbach's* *The Essence of Christianity* (1841) would greatly influence philosophers such as **Engels**, **Marx**, **David Strauss**, **Nietzsche**, and **Max Stirner**. He considered God to be a human invention and religious activities to be wish-fulfillment. For this he is considered the founding father of modern anthropology of religion.

Blainey notes that, although **Voltaire** is widely considered to have strongly contributed to atheistic thinking during the Revolution, he also considered fear of God to have discouraged further disorder, having said “If God did not exist, it would be necessary to invent him.”<sup>[175]</sup> In *Reflections on the Revolution in France* (1790), the philosopher **Edmund Burke** denounced atheism, writing of a “literary cabal” who had “some years ago formed something like a regular plan for the destruction of the Christian religion. This object they pursued with a degree of zeal which hitherto had been discovered only in the propagators of some system of piety ... These atheistical fathers have a bigotry of their own ...” . But, Burke asserted, “man is by his constitution a religious animal”

and “atheism is against, not only our reason, but our instincts; and ... it cannot prevail long” .<sup>[176]</sup>

**Baron d'Holbach** was a prominent figure in the **French Enlightenment** who is best known for his atheism and for his voluminous writings against religion, the most famous of them being *The System of Nature* (1770) but also *Christianity Unveiled*. One goal of the **French Revolution** was a restructuring and subordination of the clergy with respect to the state through the **Civil Constitution of the Clergy**. Attempts to enforce it led to anti-clerical violence and the expulsion of many clergy from France, lasting until the **Thermidorian Reaction**. The radical **Jacobins** seized power in 1793, ushering in the **Reign of Terror**. The Jacobins were deists and introduced the **Cult of the Supreme Being** as a new French state religion. Some atheists surrounding **Jacques Hébert** instead sought to establish a **Cult of Reason**, a form of atheistic pseudo-religion with a goddess personifying reason. The **Napoleonic era** further institutionalized the secularization of French society.

In the latter half of the 19th century, atheism rose to prominence under the influence of rationalistic and freethinking philosophers. Many prominent German philosophers of this era denied the existence of deities and were critical of religion, including **Ludwig Feuerbach**, **Arthur Schopenhauer**, **Max Stirner**, **Karl Marx**, and **Friedrich Nietzsche**.<sup>[177]</sup>

**George Holyoake** was the last person (1842) imprisoned in Great Britain due to atheist beliefs.<sup>[178]</sup> **Stephen Law** states that Holyoake “first coined the term 'secularism'”.<sup>[179]</sup>

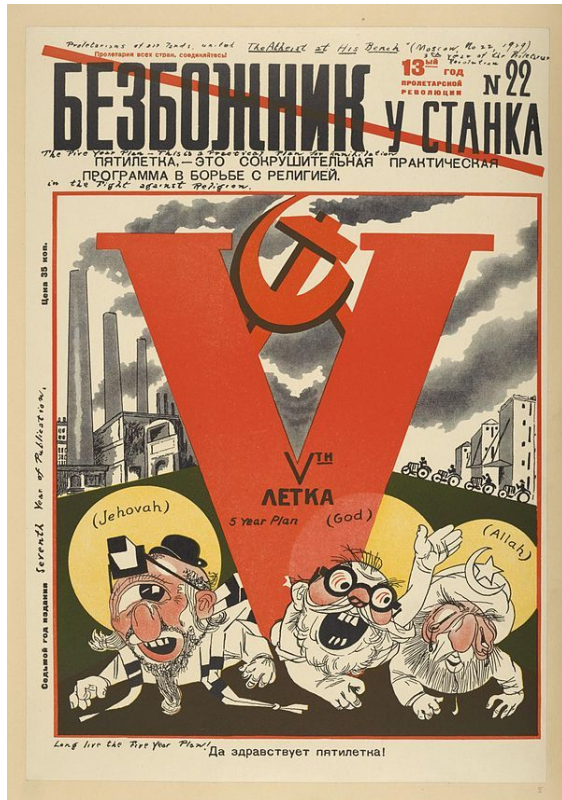
### 5.6.5 Since 1900

Further information: **Marxism and religion**

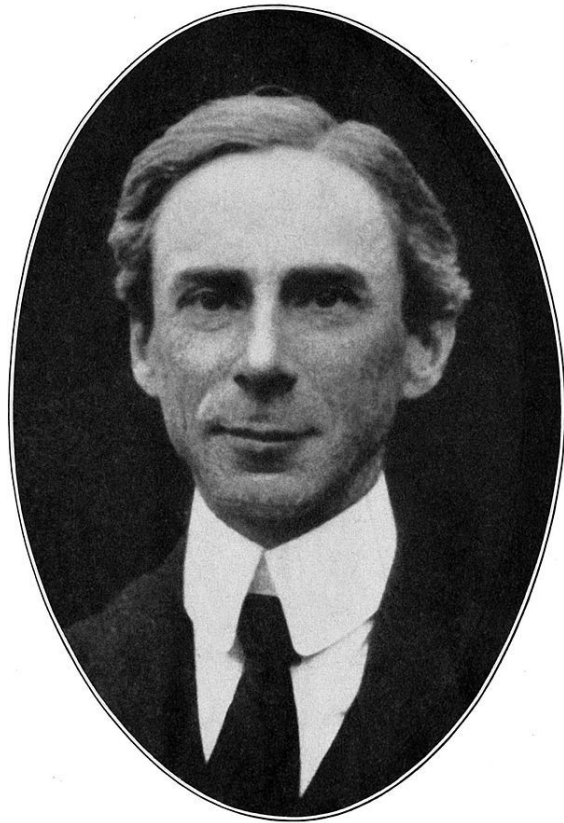
Atheism in the 20th century, particularly in the form of practical atheism, advanced in many societies. Atheistic thought found recognition in a wide variety of other, broader philosophies, such as **existentialism**, **objectivism**, **secular humanism**, **nihilism**, **anarchism**, **logical positivism**, **Marxism**, **feminism**,<sup>[180]</sup> and the general scientific and rationalist movement.

In addition, **state atheism** emerged in Eastern Europe and Asia during that period, particularly in the **Soviet Union** under **Vladimir Lenin** and **Joseph Stalin**, and in **Communist China** under **Mao Zedong**. Atheist and anti-religious policies in the Soviet Union included numerous legislative acts, the outlawing of religious instruction in the schools, and the emergence of the **League of Militant Atheists**.<sup>[181]</sup><sup>[182]</sup> After Mao, the **Chinese Communist Party** remains an atheist organization, and regulates, but does not completely forbid, the practice of religion in mainland China.<sup>[183]</sup><sup>[184]</sup><sup>[185]</sup>

While **Geoffrey Blainey** has written that “the most ruth-



1929 cover of the USSR League of Militant Atheists magazine, showing the gods of the Abrahamic religions being crushed by the Communist 5-year plan



The British philosopher Bertrand Russell

less leaders in the Second World War were atheists and secularists who were intensely hostile to both Judaism and Christianity”, \* [186] Richard Madsen has pointed out that Hitler and Stalin each opened and closed churches as a matter of political expedience, and Stalin softened his opposition to Christianity in order to improve public acceptance of his regime during the war. \* [187] Blackford and Schüklenk have written that “the Soviet Union was undeniably an atheist state, and the same applies to Maoist China and Pol Pot’s fanatical Khmer Rouge regime in Cambodia in the 1970s. That does not, however, show that the atrocities committed by these totalitarian dictatorships were the result of atheist beliefs, carried out in the name of atheism, or caused primarily by the atheistic aspects of the relevant forms of communism.” \* [188]

Logical positivism and scientism paved the way for neopositivism, analytical philosophy, structuralism, and naturalism. Neopositivism and analytical philosophy discarded classical rationalism and metaphysics in favor of strict empiricism and epistemological nominalism. Proponents such as Bertrand Russell emphatically rejected belief in God. In his early work, Ludwig Wittgenstein attempted to separate metaphysical and supernatural language from rational discourse. A. J. Ayer asserted the unverifiability and meaninglessness of religious statements, citing his adherence to the empirical sciences. Relatedly the applied structuralism of Lévi-Strauss sourced re-

ligious language to the human subconscious in denying its transcendental meaning. J. N. Findlay and J. J. C. Smart argued that the existence of God is not logically necessary. Naturalists and materialistic monists such as John Dewey considered the natural world to be the basis of everything, denying the existence of God or immortality. \* [57] \* [189]

### 5.6.6 Other developments

Other leaders like Periyar E. V. Ramasamy, a prominent atheist leader of India, fought against Hinduism and Brahmins for discriminating and dividing people in the name of caste and religion. \* [190] This was highlighted in 1956 when he arranged for the erection of a statue depicting a Hindu god in a humble representation and made antitheistic statements. \* [191]

Atheist Vashti McCollum was the plaintiff in a landmark 1948 Supreme Court case that struck down religious education in US public schools. \* [192] Madalyn Murray O’Hair was perhaps one of the most influential American atheists; she brought forth the 1963 Supreme Court case *Murray v. Curlett* which banned compulsory prayer in public schools. \* [193] In 1966, *Time* magazine asked “Is God Dead?” \* [194] in response to the Death of God theological movement, citing the estimation that nearly half of all people in the world lived under an anti-



religious power, and millions more in Africa, Asia, and South America seemed to lack knowledge of the Christian view of theology. \* [195] The **Freedom From Religion Foundation** was co-founded by Anne Nicol Gaylor and her daughter, **Annie Laurie Gaylor**, in 1976 in the United States, and incorporated nationally in 1978. It promotes the **separation of church and state**. \* [196] \* [197]

Since the fall of the **Berlin Wall**, the number of actively anti-religious regimes has reduced considerably. In 2006, Timothy Shah of the **Pew Forum** noted “a worldwide trend across all major religious groups, in which God-based and faith-based movements in general are experiencing increasing confidence and influence vis-à-vis secular movements and ideologies.” \* [198] However, **Gregory S. Paul** and **Phil Zuckerman** consider this a myth and suggest that the actual situation is much more complex and nuanced. \* [199]

A 2010 survey found that those identifying themselves as atheists or agnostics are on average more knowledgeable about religion than followers of major faiths. Non-believers scored better on questions about tenets central to Protestant and Catholic faiths. Only Mormon and Jewish faithful scored as well as atheists and agnostics. \* [200]

In 2012, the first “Women in Secularism” conference was held in Arlington, Virginia. \* [201] **Secular Woman** was organized in 2012 as a national organization focused on nonreligious women. \* [202] The **atheist feminist movement** has also become increasingly focused on fighting sexism and **sexual harassment** within the atheist movement itself. \* [203] In August 2012, Jennifer McCreight (the organizer of **Boobquake**) founded a movement within atheism known as **Atheism Plus**, or **A+**, that “applies skepticism to everything, including social issues like sexism, racism, politics, poverty, and crime” . \* [204] \* [205] \* [206]

In 2013 the first atheist monument on American government property was unveiled at the **Bradford County Courthouse** in Florida: a 1,500-pound granite bench and plinth inscribed with quotes by **Thomas Jefferson**, **Benjamin Franklin**, and **Madalyn Murray O’Hair**. \* [207] \* [208]

### 5.6.7 New Atheism

Main article: **New Atheism**

“New Atheism” is the name that has been given to a movement among some early-21st-century atheist writers who have advocated the view that “religion should not simply be tolerated but should be countered, criticized, and exposed by rational argument wherever its influence arises.” \* [209] The movement is commonly associated with **Sam Harris**, **Daniel C. Dennett**, **Richard Dawkins**, **Victor J. Stenger**, and **Christopher Hitchens**. \* [210] \* [211] Several best-selling books by these authors, published between



*The “Four Horsemen of the Non-Apocalypse” (clockwise from top left): Richard Dawkins, Christopher Hitchens, Daniel Dennett, and Sam Harris*

2004 and 2007, form the basis for much of the discussion of “New” Atheism. \* [211]

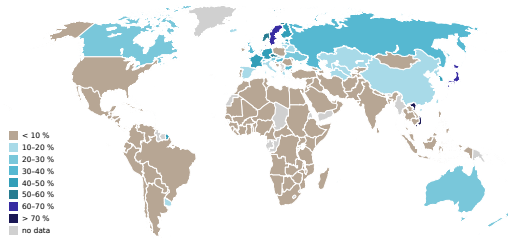
These atheists generally seek to disassociate themselves from the mass political atheism that gained ascendancy in various nations in the 20th century. In best selling books, the religiously motivated terrorist events of 9/11 and the partially successful attempts of the **Discovery Institute** to change the American science curriculum to include **creationist** ideas, together with support for those ideas from **George W. Bush** in 2005, have been cited by authors such as Harris, Dennett, Dawkins, Stenger, and Hitchens as evidence of a need to move society towards atheism. \* [212]

## 5.7 Demographics

Main article: **Demographics of atheism**

Further information: **Religiosity and education**

It is difficult to quantify the number of atheists in the world. Respondents to religious-belief polls may define “atheism” differently or draw different distinctions between *atheism*, non-religious beliefs, and non-theistic religious and spiritual beliefs. \* [213] A Hindu atheist would declare oneself as a Hindu, although also being an atheist at the same time. \* [214] A 2010 survey published in *Encyclopædia Britannica* found that the non-religious made up about 9.6% of the world’s population, and atheists about 2.0%, with a very large majority based in Asia. This figure did not include those who follow athe-

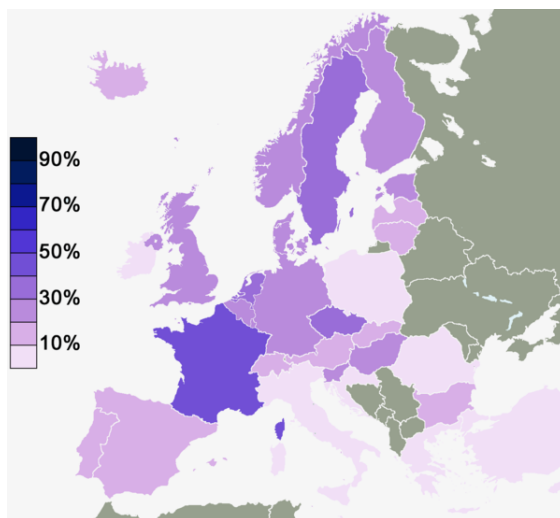


*Proportion of atheists and agnostics around the world. (2007)*

istic religions, such as some Buddhists.\*[215] The average annual change for atheism from 2000 to 2010 was  $-0.17\%$ .\*[215] Broad estimates of those who have an absence of belief in a god range from 500 million to 1.1 billion people worldwide.\*[216]\*[217]

According to global studies done by Gallup International, 13% of respondents were “convinced atheists” in 2012 and 11% were “convinced atheists” in 2015.\*[27]\*[218] As of 2012, the top ten countries with people who viewed themselves as “convinced atheists” were China (47%), Japan (31%), the Czech Republic (30%), France (29%), South Korea (15%), Germany (15%), Netherlands (14%), Austria (10%), Iceland (10%), Australia (10%), and the Republic of Ireland (10%).\*[219]

### 5.7.1 Europe



*Percentage of people in various European countries who said: “I don't believe there is any sort of spirit, God or life force.” (2010)\*[220]*

According to the 2010 Eurobarometer Poll, the percentage of those polled who agreed with the statement “you don't believe there is any sort of spirit, God or life force” varied from a high percentage in France (40%), Czech Republic (37%), Sweden (34%), Netherlands (30%), and Estonia (29%); medium-high percentage in Germany (27%), Belgium (27%), UK (25%); to very low in Poland

(5%), Greece (4%), Cyprus (3%), Malta (2%), and Romania (1%), with the European Union as a whole at 20%.\*[32] In a 2012 Eurobarometer poll on discrimination in the European Union, 16% of those polled considered themselves non believers/agnostics and 7% considered themselves atheists.\*[221]

According to a Pew Research Center survey in 2012 religiously unaffiliated (including agnostics and atheists) make up about 18% of Europeans.\*[222] According to the same survey, the religiously unaffiliated are the majority of the population only in two European countries: Czech Republic (75%) and Estonia (60%).\*[222]

### 5.7.2 Asia

There are another four countries where the unaffiliated make up a majority of the population: North Korea (71%), Japan (57%), Hong Kong (56%), and China (52%).\*[222]

### 5.7.3 Australia

According to the Australian Bureau of Statistics, 22% of Australians have “no religion”, a category that includes atheists.\*[223]

### 5.7.4 United States

In the US, there was a 1% to 5% increase in self-reported atheism from 2005 to 2012, and a larger drop in those who self-identified as “religious”, down by 13%, from 73% to 60%.\*[224] According to the World Values Survey, 4.4% of Americans self-identified as atheists in 2014.\*[225] However, the same survey showed that 11.1% of all respondents stated “no” when asked if they believed in God.\*[225] In 1984, these same figures were 1.1% and 2.2%, respectively. According to a 2015 report by the Pew Research Center, 3.1% of the US adult population identify as atheist, up from 1.6% in 2007, and within the religiously unaffiliated (or “no religion”) demographic, atheists made up 13.6%.\*[226] According to the 2015 General Sociological Survey the number of atheists and agnostics in the US has remained relatively flat in the past 23 years since in 1991 only 2% identified as atheist and 4% identified as agnostic and in 2014 only 3% identified as atheists and 5% identified as agnostics.\*[227]

### 5.7.5 Arab world

In recent years, the profile of atheism has risen substantially in the Arab world.\*[228] In major cities across the region, such as Cairo, atheists have been organizing in cafés and social media, despite regular crackdowns from authoritarian governments.\*[228] A 2012 poll by

Gallup International revealed that 5% of Saudis considered themselves to be “convinced atheists.”\*[228] However, very few young people in the Arab world have atheists in their circle of friends or acquaintances. According to one study, less than 1% did in Morocco, Egypt, Saudia Arabia, or Jordan; only 3% to 7% in the United Arab Emirates, Bahrain, Kuwait, and Palestine.\*[229] When asked whether they have “seen or heard traces of atheism in [their] locality, community, and society” only about 3% to 8% responded yes in all the countries surveyed. The only exception was the UAE, with 51%.\*[229]

### 5.7.6 Atheism, wealth, and education

A study noted positive correlations between levels of education and secularism, including atheism, in America.\*[93] According to evolutionary psychologist Nigel Barber, atheism blossoms in places where most people feel economically secure, particularly in the social democracies of Europe, as there is less uncertainty about the future with extensive social safety nets and better health care resulting in a greater quality of life and higher life expectancy. By contrast, in underdeveloped countries, there are virtually no atheists.\*[230]

In a 2008 study, researchers found intelligence to be negatively related to religious belief in Europe and the United States. In a sample of 137 countries, the correlation between national IQ and disbelief in God was found to be 0.60.\*[231] Evolutionary psychologist Nigel Barber states that the reason atheists are more intelligent than religious people is better explained by social, environmental, and wealth factors which happen to correlate with loss of religious belief as well. He doubts that religion causes stupidity, noting that some highly intelligent people have also been religious, but he says it is plausible that higher intelligence correlates to rejection of improbable religious beliefs and that the situation between intelligence and rejection of religious beliefs is quite complex.\*[232]

## 5.8 See also

- Practical atheism
- Apostasy
- Brights movement
- Dysteleology
- Secular religion

## 5.9 Notes



- [1] Harvey, Van A. *Agnosticism and Atheism*, in Flynn 2007, p. 35: “The terms *ATHEISM* and *AGNOSTICISM* lend

themselves to two different definitions. The first takes the privative *a* both before the Greek *theos* (divinity) and *gnosis* (to know) to mean that atheism is simply the absence of belief in the gods and agnosticism is simply lack of knowledge of some specified subject matter. The second definition takes atheism to mean the explicit denial of the existence of gods and agnosticism as the position of someone who, because the existence of gods is unknowable, suspends judgment regarding them ... The first is the more inclusive and recognizes only two alternatives: Either one believes in the gods or one does not. Consequently, there is no third alternative, as those who call themselves agnostics sometimes claim. Insofar as they lack belief, they are really atheists. Moreover, since absence of belief is the cognitive position in which everyone is born, the burden of proof falls on those who advocate religious belief. The proponents of the second definition, by contrast, regard the first definition as too broad because it includes uninformed children along with aggressive and explicit atheists. Consequently, it is unlikely that the public will adopt it.”

- [2] Simon Blackburn, ed. (2008). “atheism” . *The Oxford Dictionary of Philosophy* (2008 ed.). Oxford University Press. Retrieved 2013-11-21. Either the lack of belief that there exists a god, or the belief that there exists none. Sometimes thought itself to be more dogmatic than mere agnosticism, although atheists retort that everyone is an atheist about most gods, so they merely advance one step further.
- [3] Most dictionaries (see the OneLook query for “atheism” ) first list one of the more narrow definitions.
- Runes, Dagobert D.(editor) (1942). *Dictionary of Philosophy*. New Jersey: Littlefield, Adams & Co. Philosophical Library. ISBN 0-06463461-2. Archived from the original on 2011-05-13. Retrieved 2011-04-09. (a) the belief that there is no God; (b) Some philosophers have been called “atheistic” because they have not held to a belief in a personal God. Atheism in this sense means “not theistic” . The former meaning of the term is a literal rendering. The latter meaning is a less rigorous use of the term though widely current in the history of thought – entry by Vergilius Ferm
- [4] “Atheism” . *OxfordDictionaries.com*. Oxford University Press. Retrieved April 23, 2017.
- [5] Nielsen 2013: “Instead of saying that an atheist is someone who believes that it is false or probably false that there is a God, a more adequate characterization of atheism consists in the more complex claim that to be an atheist is to be someone who rejects belief in God for the following reasons ... : for an anthropomorphic God, the atheist rejects belief in God because it is false or probably false that there is a God; for a nonanthropomorphic God ... because the concept of such a God is either meaningless, unintelligible, contradictory, incomprehensible, or incoherent; for the God portrayed by some modern or contemporary theologians or philosophers ... because the concept of God in question is such that it merely masks an atheistic substance—e.g., “God” is just another name for love, or ... a symbolic term for moral ideals.”



- [6] Edwards 2005: “On our definition, an ‘atheist’ is a person who rejects belief in God, regardless of whether or not his reason for the rejection is the claim that ‘God exists’ expresses a false proposition. People frequently adopt an attitude of rejection toward a position for reasons other than that it is a false proposition. It is common among contemporary philosophers, and indeed it was not uncommon in earlier centuries, to reject positions on the ground that they are meaningless. Sometimes, too, a theory is rejected on such grounds as that it is sterile or redundant or capricious, and there are many other considerations which in certain contexts are generally agreed to constitute good grounds for rejecting an assertion.”
- [7] Rowe 1998: “As commonly understood, atheism is the position that affirms the nonexistence of God. So an atheist is someone who disbelieves in God, whereas a theist is someone who believes in God. Another meaning of ‘atheism’ is simply nonbelief in the existence of God, rather than positive belief in the nonexistence of God. ... an atheist, in the broader sense of the term, is someone who disbelieves in every form of deity, not just the God of traditional Western theology.”
- [8] J.J.C. Smart. “Atheism and Agnosticism” . *Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy*.
- [9] “Definitions: Atheism” . Department of Religious Studies, University of Alabama. Retrieved 2012-12-01.
- [10] *Oxford English Dictionary* (2nd ed.). 1989. Belief in a deity, or deities, as opposed to atheism
- [11] “Merriam-Webster Online Dictionary” . Archived from the original on 2011-05-14. Retrieved 2011-04-09. ...belief in the existence of a god or gods...
- [12] Smart, J. J. C. Zalta, Edward N., ed. “Atheism and Agnosticism” . The Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy (Spring 2013 Edition).
- [13] Drachmann, A. B. (1977) [1922]. *Atheism in Pagan Antiquity*. Chicago: Ares Publishers. ISBN 0-89005201-8. Atheism and atheist are words formed from Greek roots and with Greek derivative endings. Nevertheless they are not Greek; their formation is not consonant with Greek usage. In Greek they said *átheos* and *atheotēs*; to these the English words ungodly and ungodliness correspond rather closely. In exactly the same way as ungodly, *átheos* was used as an expression of severe censure and moral condemnation; this use is an old one, and the oldest that can be traced. Not till later do we find it employed to denote a certain philosophical creed.
- [14] Whitmarsh, Tim. “8. Atheism on Trial” . *Battling the Gods: Atheism in the Ancient World*. Knopf Doubleday. ISBN 978-0-307-94877-9.
- [15] Wootton, David (1992). “1. New Histories of Atheism” . In Hunter, Michael; Wootton, David. *Atheism from the Reformation to the Enlightenment*. Oxford: Clarendon Press. ISBN 0-19822736-1.
- [16] Armstrong 1999.
- [17] Hancock, Ralph (1996). *The Legacy of the French Revolution*. Lanham, United States: Rowman and Littlefield Publishers. p. 22. ISBN 978-0-847-67842-6. Retrieved 2015-05-30. Extract of page 22
- [18] Various authors. “Logical Arguments for Atheism” . *The Secular Web Library*. Internet Infidels. Retrieved 2012-10-02.
- [19] Shook, John R. “Skepticism about the Supernatural” (PDF). Retrieved 2012-10-02.
- [20] Drange, Theodore M. (1996). “The Arguments From Evil and Nonbelief” . *Secular Web Library*. Internet Infidels. Retrieved 2012-10-02.
- [21] Honderich, Ted (Ed.) (1995). “Humanism” . *The Oxford Companion to Philosophy*. Oxford University Press. p 376. ISBN 0-19-866132-0.
- [22] Fales, Evan. *Naturalism and Physicalism*, in Martin 2006, pp. 122–131.
- [23] Baggini 2003, pp. 3–4.
- [24] Stenger 2007, pp. 17–18, citing Parsons, Keith M. (1989). *God and the Burden of Proof: Plantinga, Swinburne, and the Analytical Defense of Theism*. Amherst, New York: Prometheus Books. ISBN 978-0-879-75551-5.
- [25] Zuckerman, Phil (2007). Martin, Michael T, ed. *The Cambridge Companion to Atheism*. Cambridge, England: Cambridge University Press. p. 56. ISBN 978-0-521-60367-6. OL 22379448M. Retrieved 2011-04-09.
- [26] “Religiosity and Atheism Index” (PDF). Zurich: WIN/GIA. 27 July 2012. Retrieved 2013-10-01.
- [27] “New Survey Shows the World's Most and Least Religious Places” . NPR. 13 April 2015. Retrieved 2015-04-29.
- [28] Keysar, Ariela; Navarro-Rivera, Juhem (2017). “36. A World of Atheism: Global Demographics” . In Bullivant, Stephen; Ruse, Michael. *The Oxford Handbook of Atheism*. Oxford University Press. ISBN 0199644659.
- [29] “UK among most secular nations” . BBC News. 2004-02-26. Retrieved 2015-01-14.
- [30] “Worldwide Adherents of All Religions by Six Continental Areas, Mid-2007” . Encyclopædia Britannica. 2007. Retrieved 2013-11-21.
- 2.3% Atheists: Persons professing atheism, skepticism, disbelief, or irreligion, including the militantly antireligious (opposed to all religion).
  - 11.9% Nonreligious: Persons professing no religion, nonbelievers, agnostics, freethinkers, uninterested, or dereligionized secularists indifferent to all religion but not militantly so.
- [31] “Gallup International Religiosity Index” (PDF). *Washington Post*. WIN-Gallup International. April 2015.
- [32] *Social values, Science and Technology* (PDF). Directorate General Research, European Union. 2010. p. 207. Archived (PDF) from the original on 2011-04-30. Retrieved 2011-04-09.

- [33]  Chisholm, Hugh, ed. (1911). "Atheism". *Encyclopædia Britannica* (11th ed.). Cambridge University Press. The term as generally used, however, is highly ambiguous. Its meaning varies (a) according to the various definitions of deity, and especially (b) according as it is (i.) deliberately adopted by a thinker as a description of his own theological standpoint, or (ii.) applied by one set of thinkers to their opponents. As to (a), it is obvious that atheism from the standpoint of the Christian is a very different conception as compared with atheism as understood by a Deist, a Positivist, a follower of Euhemerus or Herbert Spencer, or a Buddhist.
- [34] Martin 1990, pp. 467–468: "In the popular sense an agnostic neither believes nor disbelieves that God exists, while an atheist disbelieves that God exists. However, this common contrast of agnosticism with atheism will hold only if one assumes that atheism means positive atheism. In the popular sense, agnosticism is compatible with negative atheism. Since negative atheism by definition simply means not holding any concept of God, it is compatible with neither believing nor disbelieving in God."
- [35] Flint 1903, pp. 49–51: "The atheist may however be, and not unfrequently is, an agnostic. There is an agnostic atheism or atheistic agnosticism, and the combination of atheism with agnosticism which may be so named is not an uncommon one."
- [36] Holland, Aaron. *Agnosticism*, in Flynn 2007, p. 34: "It is important to note that this interpretation of agnosticism is compatible with theism or atheism, since it is only asserted that *knowledge* of God's existence is unattainable."
- [37] Martin 2006, p. 2: "But agnosticism is compatible with negative atheism in that agnosticism *entails* negative atheism. Since agnostics do not believe in God, they are by definition negative atheists. This is not to say that negative atheism entails agnosticism. A negative atheist *might* disbelieve in God but need not."
- [38] Barker 2008, p. 96: "People are invariably surprised to hear me say I am both an atheist and an agnostic, as if this somehow weakens my certainty. I usually reply with a question like, 'Well, are you a Republican or an American?' The two words serve different concepts and are not mutually exclusive. Agnosticism addresses knowledge; atheism addresses belief. The agnostic says, 'I don't have a knowledge that God exists.' The atheist says, 'I don't have a belief that God exists.' You can say both things at the same time. Some agnostics are atheistic and some are theistic."
- [39] Besant, Annie. *Why Should Atheists Be Persecuted?*, in Bradlaugh et al. 1884, pp. 185–186: "The Atheist waits for proof of God. Till that proof comes he remains, as his name implies, without God. His mind is open to every new truth, after it has passed the warder Reason at the gate."
- [40] Holyoake, George Jacob (1842). "Mr. Mackintosh's New God". *The Oracle of Reason, Or, Philosophy Vindicated*. 1 (23): 186. On the contrary, I, as an Atheist, simply profess that I do not see sufficient reason to *believe* that there is a god. I do not pretend to *know* that there is no god. The whole question of god's existence, *belief* or *disbelief*, a question of probability or of improbability, not knowledge.
- [41] Nielsen 2013: "atheism, in general, the critique and denial of metaphysical beliefs in God or spiritual beings. As such, it is usually distinguished from theism, which affirms the reality of the divine and often seeks to demonstrate its existence. Atheism is also distinguished from agnosticism, which leaves open the question whether there is a god or not, professing to find the questions unanswered or unanswerable."
- [42] "Atheism". *Encyclopædia Britannica Concise*. Merriam Webster. Retrieved 2011-12-15. Critique and denial of metaphysical beliefs in God or divine beings. Unlike agnosticism, which leaves open the question of whether there is a God, atheism is a positive denial. It is rooted in an array of philosophical systems.
- [43]  Chisholm, Hugh, ed. (1911). "Atheism". *Encyclopædia Britannica* (11th ed.). Cambridge University Press. But dogmatic atheism is rare compared with the sceptical type, which is identical with agnosticism in so far as it denies the capacity of the mind of man to form any conception of God, but is different from it in so far as the agnostic merely holds his judgment in suspense, though, in practice, agnosticism is apt to result in an attitude towards religion which is hardly distinguishable from a passive and unaggressive atheism.
- [44] Martin 2006.
- [45] "Atheism as rejection of religious beliefs". *Encyclopædia Britannica*. 1 (15th ed.). 2011. p. 666. 0852294735. Archived from the original on 2011-05-12. Retrieved 2011-04-09.
- [46] d'Holbach, P. H. T. (1772). *Good Sense*. Retrieved 2011-04-07.
- [47] Smith 1979, p. 14.
- [48] Nagel, Ernest (1959). "Philosophical Concepts of Atheism". *Basic Beliefs: The Religious Philosophies of Mankind*. Sheridan House. I shall understand by "atheism" a critique and a denial of the major claims of all varieties of theism ... atheism is not to be identified with sheer unbelief ... Thus, a child who has received no religious instruction and has never heard about God, is not an atheist – for he is not denying any theistic claims. Similarly in the case of an adult who, if he has withdrawn from the faith of his father without reflection or because of frank indifference to any theological issue, is also not an atheist – for such an adult is not challenging theism and not professing any views on the subject. reprinted in *Critiques of God*, edited by Peter A. Angeles, Prometheus Books, 1997.
- [49] Flew 1976, pp. 14ff: "In this interpretation an atheist becomes: not someone who positively asserts the non-existence of God; but someone who is simply not a theist. Let us, for future ready reference, introduce the labels 'positive atheist' for the former and 'negative atheist' for the latter."

- [50] Maritain, Jacques (July 1949). "On the Meaning of Contemporary Atheism". *The Review of Politics*. **11** (3): 267–280. doi:10.1017/S0034670500044168.
- [51] Kenny, Anthony (2006). "Why I Am Not an Atheist". *What I believe*. Continuum. ISBN 0-82648971-0. The true default position is neither theism nor atheism, but agnosticism ... a claim to knowledge needs to be substantiated; ignorance need only be confessed.
- [52] "Why I'm Not an Atheist: The Case for Agnosticism". *Huffington Post*. 28 May 2013. Retrieved 2013-11-26.
- [53] O'Brien, Breda (7 July 2009). "Many atheists I know would be certain of a high place in heaven". *Irish Times*. Archived from the original on 2011-05-20. Retrieved 2011-04-09.
- [54] Warner, Matthew (8 June 2012). "More faith to be an atheist than a Christian". Retrieved 2013-11-26.
- [55] Baggini 2003, pp. 30–34. "Who seriously claims we should say 'I neither believe nor disbelieve that the Pope is a robot', or 'As to whether or not eating this piece of chocolate will turn me into an elephant I am completely agnostic'. In the absence of any good reasons to believe these outlandish claims, we rightly disbelieve them, we don't just suspend judgement."
- [56] Baggini 2003, p. 22. "A lack of proof is no grounds for the suspension of belief. This is because when we have a lack of absolute proof we can still have overwhelming evidence or one explanation which is far superior to the alternatives."
- [57] Smart, J.C.C. (9 March 2004). "Atheism and Agnosticism". *Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy*. Retrieved 2011-04-09.
- [58] Dawkins 2006, p. 50.
- [59] Cudworth, Ralph (1678). *The True Intellectual System of the Universe: the first part, wherein all the reason and philosophy of atheism is confuted and its impossibility demonstrated*.
- [60] See, for example: Pressley, Sue Anne (September 8, 1996). "Atheist Group Moves Ahead Without O'Hair". *The Washington Post*. Retrieved 2014-10-22.
- [61] Lowder, Jeffery Jay (1997). "Atheism and Society". Archived from the original on 2011-05-22. Retrieved 2011-04-09.
- [62] Harris 2006, p. 51.
- [63] <http://atheism.about.com/od/Atheist-Dictionary/g/Definition-Pragmatic-Atheist.htm>
- [64] Paul Henri Thiry, Baron d'Holbach, *System of Nature; or, the Laws of the Moral and Physical World* (London, 1797), Vol. 1, p. 25
- [65] Hume 1748, Part III: "If we take in our hand any volume; of divinity or school metaphysics, for instance; let us ask, Does it contain any abstract reasoning concerning quantity or number? No. Does it contain any experimental reasoning concerning matter of fact and existence? No. Commit it then to the flames: for it can contain nothing but sophistry and illusion."
- [66] Zdybicka 2005, p. 20.
- [67] Drange, Theodore M. (1998). "Atheism, Agnosticism, Noncognitivism". *Internet Infidels, Secular Web Library*. Retrieved 2007-APR-07.
- [68] Ayer, A. J. (1946). *Language, Truth and Logic*. Dover. pp. 115–116. In a footnote, Ayer attributes this view to "Professor H. H. Price".
- [69] Zdybicka 2005, p. 19.
- [70] Hume 1779.
- [71] V.A. Gunasekara, "The Buddhist Attitude to God". Archived from the original on 2008-01-02. In the Bhuridatta Jataka, "The Buddha argues that the three most commonly given attributes of God, viz. omnipotence, omniscience and benevolence towards humanity cannot all be mutually compatible with the existential fact of dukkha."
- [72] Feuerbach, Ludwig (1841) *The Essence of Christianity*
- [73] Walpola Rahula, *What the Buddha Taught*. Grove Press, 1974. Pages 51–52.
- [74] Bakunin, Michael (1916). "God and the State". New York: Mother Earth Publishing Association. Archived from the original on 2011-05-21. Retrieved 2011-04-09.
- [75] The Raelian Foundation (2005). *Intelligent Design*. p. 312.
- [76] Johnson, Philip; et al. (2005). Claydon, David; et al., eds. *Religious and Non-Religious Spirituality in the Western World ( "New Age" )*. *A New Vision, A New Heart, A Renewed Call*. **2**. William Carey Library. p. 194. ISBN 978-0-878-08364-0. Although Neo-Pagans share common commitments to nature and spirit there is a diversity of beliefs and practices ... Some are atheists, others are polytheists (several gods exist), some are pantheists (all is God) and others are panentheists (all is in God).
- [77] Matthews, Carol S. (2009). *New Religions*. Chelsea House Publishers. ISBN 978-0-791-08096-2. There is no universal worldview that all Neo-Pagans/Wiccans hold. One online information source indicates that depending on how the term *God* is defined, Neo-Pagans might be classified as monotheists, duotheists (two gods), polytheists, pantheists, or atheists.
- [78] Chakravarti, Sitansu (1991). *Hinduism, a way of life*. Motilal Banarsidass Publ. p. 65. ISBN 978-8-120-80899-7. For the thoroughgoing atheist, the path is extremely difficult, if not lonely, for he can not develop any relationship of love with God, nor can he expect any divine help on the long and arduous journey.
- [79] Pattanaik, Devdutt (2009-08-18). "63 worthy beings". *Mid-day*. Archived from the original on September 27, 2012. Retrieved 2014-07-15.
- [80] Muni Nagraj. *Āgama and Tripiṭaka: A Comparative Study : a Critical Study of the Jaina and the Buddhist Canonical Literature, Volume 1*. Today & Tomorrow's Printers and Publishers. p. 203. ISBN 978-8-170-22730-4.

- [81] Kedar, Nath Tiwari (1997). *Comparative Religion*. Motilal Banarsidass. p. 50. ISBN 8-12080293-4.
- [82] Jacobs, Jonathan D. (2015). "7. The Ineffable, Inconceivable, and Incomprehensible God. Fundamentality and Apophatic Theology (pp. 158 —176)". In Kvanvig, Jonathan. *Oxford Studies in Philosophy of Religion. Volume 6*. Oxford University Press. p. 168. ISBN 978-0-198-72233-5. ISBN 0-19872233-8.
- [83] Fagenblat, Michael, ed. (2017). *Negative Theology as Jewish Modernity*. Bloomington, Indiana: Indiana University Press. p. 3. ISBN 978-0-253-02504-3. ISBN 0-25302504-4.
- [84] Bryson, Michael E. (2016). *The Atheist Milton*. Abingdon-on-Thames: Routledge. p. 114. ISBN 978-1-317-04095-8. ISBN 1-31704095-3.
- [85] Gleeson, David (10 August 2006). "Common Misconceptions About Atheists and Atheism" . Retrieved 2013-11-21.
- [86] Smith 1979, p. 275. "Perhaps the most common criticism of atheism is the claim that it leads inevitably to moral bankruptcy."
- [87] Pascal, Blaise (1669). *Pensées*, II: "The Misery of Man Without God" .
- [88] Sartre 2004, p. 127.
- [89] Sartre 2001, p. 45.
- [90] Sartre 2001, p. 32.
- [91] Norris, Pippa; Inglehart, Ronald (2004). *Sacred and Secular: Religion and Politics Worldwide*. Cambridge University Press.
- [92] Bruce, Steve (2003). *Religion and Politics*. Cambridge, UK.
- [93] Zuckerman, Phil (2009). "Atheism, Secularity, and Well-Being: How the Findings of Social Science Counter Negative Stereotypes and Assumptions" (PDF). *Sociology Compass*. **3** (6): 949–971. doi:10.1111/j.1751-9020.2009.00247.x.
- [94] "Societies without God are more benevolent" . The Guardian. 2 September 2010. Retrieved 2013-11-21.
- [95] Wallace, B. Alan Ph.D. (November 1999). "Is Buddhism Really Non-Theistic?" (PDF). National Conference of the American Academy of Religion lectures. Boston, MA. p. 8. Retrieved 2014-07-22. "Thus, in light of the theoretical progression from the bhava<sup>a</sup>ga to the tath<sup>a</sup>gatagarbha to the primordial wisdom of the absolute space of reality, Buddhism is not so simply non-theistic as it may appear at first glance."
- [96] Winston, Robert (Ed.) (2004). *Human*. New York: DK Publishing, Inc. p. 299. ISBN 0-75661901-7. Non-belief has existed for centuries. For example, Buddhism and Jainism have been called atheistic religions because they do not advocate belief in gods.
- [97] "Humanistic Judaism" . BBC. 20 July 2006. Archived from the original on 2011-04-16. Retrieved 2011-04-09.
- [98] Levin, S. (May 1995). "Jewish Atheism". *New Humanist*. **110** (2): 13–15.
- [99] "Christian Atheism" . BBC. 17 May 2006. Retrieved 2011-04-09.
- [100] Altizer, Thomas J. J. (1967). *The Gospel of Christian Atheism*. London: Collins. pp. 102–103. Retrieved 2011-04-09.
- [101] Lyas, Colin (January 1970). "On the Coherence of Christian Atheism" . *Philosophy: the Journal of the Royal Institute of Philosophy*. **45** (171): 1–19. doi:10.1017/S0031819100009578.
- [102] Smith 1979, pp. 21–22
- [103] Slavoj Žižek: Less Than Nothing (2012)
- [104] Alain de Botton: Religion for Atheists (2012)
- [105] Alexander Bard and Jan Söderqvist: The Global Empire (2012)
- [106] Smith 1979, p. 275. "Among the many myths associated with religion, none is more widespread - [sic] or more disastrous in its effects—than the myth that moral values cannot be divorced from the belief in a god."
- [107] In Dostoevsky's *The Brothers Karamazov* (Book Eleven: Brother Ivan Fyodorovich, Chapter 4) there is the famous argument that *If there is no God, all things are permitted*.: "But what will become of men then?" I asked him, 'without God and immortal life? All things are lawful then, they can do what they like?'"
- [108] For Kant, the presupposition of God, soul, and freedom was a practical concern, for "Morality, by itself, constitutes a system, but happiness does not, unless it is distributed in exact proportion to morality. This, however, is possible in an intelligible world only under a wise author and ruler. Reason compels us to admit such a ruler, together with life in such a world, which we must consider as future life, or else all moral laws are to be considered as idle dreams ..." (*Critique of Pure Reason*, A811).
- [109] Baggini 2003, p. 38
- [110] *Human Rights, Virtue, and the Common Good*. Rowman & Littlefield. 1996. ISBN 978-0-8476-8279-9. Retrieved 2011-04-09. That problem was brought home to us with dazzling clarity by Nietzsche, who had reflected more deeply than any of his contemporaries on the implications of godlessness and come to the conclusion that a fatal contradiction lay at the heart of modern theological enterprise: it thought that Christian morality, which it wished to preserve, was independent of Christian dogma, which it rejected. This, in Nietzsche's mind, was an absurdity. It amounted to nothing less than dismissing the architect while trying to keep the building or getting rid of the lawgiver while claiming the protection of the law.
- [111] *The Blackwell Companion to Natural Theology*. Wiley-Blackwell. 11 May 2009. ISBN 978-1-4051-7657-6. Retrieved 2011-04-09. Morality "has truth only if God is truth—it stands or falls with faith in God" (Nietzsche 1968, p. 70). The moral argument for the existence of God essentially takes Nietzsche's assertion as one of its premises:



if there is no God, then “there are altogether no moral facts” .

- [112] *Victorian Subjects*. Duke University Press. 1991. ISBN 978-0-8223-1110-2. Retrieved 2011-04-09. Like other mid-nineteenth-century writers, George Eliot was not fully aware of the implications of her humanism, and, as Nietzsche saw, attempted the difficult task of upholding the Christian morality of altruism without faith in the Christian God.
- [113] Moore, G. E. (1903). *Principia Ethica*. Archived from the original on 2011-05-14. Retrieved 2011-04-09.
- [114] Susan Neiman (6 November 2006). *Beyond Belief Session 6* (Conference). Salk Institute, La Jolla, CA: The Science Network.
- [115] Baggini 2003, p. 40
- [116] Baggini 2003, p. 43
- [117] 101 Ethical Dilemmas, 2nd edition, by Cohen, M., Routledge 2007, pp 184–5. (Cohen notes particularly that Plato and Aristotle produced arguments in favour of slavery.)
- [118] Political Philosophy from Plato to Mao, by Cohen, M, Second edition 2008
- [119] Harris 2005, Harris 2006, Dawkins 2006, Hitchens 2007, Russell 1957
- [120] Marx, K. 1976. Introduction to A Contribution to the Critique of Hegel's Philosophy of Right. Collected Works, v. 3. New York.
- [121] Martin Amis; Koba the Dread; Vintage Books; London; 2003; ISBN 978-0-099-43802-1; pp. 30–31.
- [122] Harris 2006a.
- [123] Moreira-almeida, A.; Neto, F.; Koenig, H. G. (2006). “Religiousness and mental health: a review” . *Revista Brasileira de Psiquiatria*. **28** (3): 242–250. doi:10.1590/S1516-44462006005000006. PMID 16924349.
- [124] See for example: Kahoe, R.D. (June 1977). “Intrinsic Religion and Authoritarianism: A Differentiated Relationship” . *Journal for the Scientific Study of Religion*. **16** (2): 179–182. doi:10.2307/1385749. JSTOR 1385749. Also see: Altemeyer, Bob; Hunsberger, Bruce (1992). “Authoritarianism, Religious Fundamentalism, Quest, and Prejudice” . *International Journal for the Psychology of Religion*. **2** (2): 113–133. doi:10.1207/s15327582ijpr0202\_5.
- [125] Harris, Sam (2005). “An Atheist Manifesto” . Truthdig. Archived from the original on 2011-05-16. Retrieved 2011-04-09. In a world riven by ignorance, only the atheist refuses to deny the obvious: Religious faith promotes human violence to an astonishing degree.
- [126] Feinberg, John S.; Feinberg, Paul D. (4 November 2010). *Ethics for a Brave New World*. Stand To Reason. ISBN 978-1-581-34712-8. Retrieved 2007-10-18. Over a half century ago, while I was still a child, I recall hearing a number of old people offer the following explanation for the great disasters that had befallen Russia: 'Men have forgotten God; that's why all this has happened.' Since then I have spent well-nigh 50 years working on the history of our revolution; in the process I have read hundreds of books, collected hundreds of personal testimonies, and have already contributed eight volumes of my own toward the effort of clearing away the rubble left by that upheaval. But if I were asked today to formulate as concisely as possible the main cause of the ruinous revolution that swallowed up some 60 million of our people, I could not put it more accurately than to repeat: 'Men have forgotten God; that's why all this has happened.'
- [127] D'Souza, Dinesh. “Answering Atheist's Arguments” . Catholic Education Resource Center. Retrieved 2011-04-09.
- [128] Dawkins 2006, p. 291.
- [129] 10 myths and 10 truths about Atheism Sam Harris
- [130] The word αθεοι—in any of its forms—appears nowhere else in the Septuagint or the New Testament. Robertson, A.T. (1960) [1932]. “Ephesians: Chapter 2” . *Word Pictures in the New Testament*. Broadman Press. Retrieved 2011-04-09. Old Greek word, not in LXX, only here in N.T. Atheists in the original sense of being without God and also in the sense of hostility to God from failure to worship him. See Paul's words in Ro 1:18–32.
- [131] “atheist” . American Heritage Dictionary of the English Language. 2009. Retrieved 2013-11-21.
- [132] Martiail, John (1566). *A Replie to Mr Calphills Blasphemous Answer Made Against the Treatise of the Cross*. English recusant literature, 1558–1640. **203**. Louvain. p. 49.
- [133] Rendered as *Atheistes*: Golding, Arthur (1571). *The Psalmes of David and others, with J. Calvin's commentaries*. pp. Ep. Ded. 3. The Atheistes which say..there is no God. Translated from Latin.
- [134] Hanmer, Meredith (1577). *The auncient ecclesiasticall histories of the first six hundred years after Christ, written by Eusebius, Socrates, and Evagrius*. London. p. 63. OCLC 55193813. The opinion which they conceaue of you, to be Atheists, or godlesse men.
- [135] *Merriam-Webster Online:Atheism*, retrieved 2013-11-21, First Known Use: 1546
- [136] Rendered as *Athisme*: de Mornay, Philippe (1581). *A Woorke Concerning the Trewnesse of the Christian Religion: Against Atheists, Epicures, Paynims, Iewes, Mahumetists, and other infidels* [*De la vérite de la religion chrétienne (1581, Paris)*]. Translated from French to English by Arthur Golding & Philip Sidney and published in London, 1587. Athisme, that is to say, vtter godlesnes.
- [137] Vergil, Polydore (c. 1534). *English history*. Retrieved 2011-04-09. Godd would not longe suffer this impietie, or rather atheonisme.



- [138] The *Oxford English Dictionary* also records an earlier, irregular formation, *atheonism*, dated from about 1534. The later and now obsolete words *athean* and *atheal* are dated to 1611 and 1612 respectively. prep. by J. A. Simpson ... (1989). *The Oxford English Dictionary* (Second ed.). Oxford University Press. ISBN 0-19861186-2.
- [139] Burton, Robert (1621). *deist. The Anatomy of Melancholy*. Part III, section IV. II. i. Retrieved 2011-04-09. Cousin-germans to these men are many of our great Philosophers and Deists
- [140] Martin, Edward (1662). "Five Letters" . *His opinion concerning the difference between the Church of England and Geneva [etc.]* London. p. 45. To have said my office..twice a day..among Rebels, Theists, Atheists, Philologers, Wits, Masters of Reason, Puritanes [etc.].
- [141] Bailey, Nathan (1675). *An universal etymological English dictionary*.
- [142] "Secondly, that nothing out of nothing, in the sense of the atheistic objectors, viz. that nothing, which once was not, could by any power whatsoever be brought into being, is absolutely false; and that, if it were true, it would make no more against theism than it does against atheism ..." Cudworth, Ralph. *The true intellectual system of the universe*. 1678. Chapter V Section II p.73
- [143] In part because of its wide use in monotheistic Western society, *atheism* is usually described as "disbelief in God", rather than more generally as "disbelief in deities". A clear distinction is rarely drawn in modern writings between these two definitions, but some archaic uses of *atheism* encompassed only disbelief in the singular God, not in polytheistic deities. It is on this basis that the obsolete term *adeism* was coined in the late 19th century to describe an absence of belief in plural deities.
- [144] Pandian (1996). *India, that is, sidd*. Allied Publishers. p. 64. ISBN 978-8-170-23561-3. Retrieved 2011-04-09.
- [145] Dasgupta, Surendranath (1992). *A history of Indian philosophy, Volume 1*. Motilal Banarsidass Publ. p. 258. ISBN 978-8-120-80412-8.
- [146] Sarvepalli Radhakrishnan and Charles A. Moore. *A Sourcebook in Indian Philosophy*. (Princeton University Press: 1957, Twelfth Princeton Paperback printing 1989) pp. 227–249. ISBN 0-69101958-4.
- [147] Satischandra Chatterjee and Dhirendramohan Datta. *An Introduction to Indian Philosophy*. Eighth Reprint Edition. (University of Calcutta: 1984). p. 55.
- [148] Joshi, L.R. (1966). "A New Interpretation of Indian Atheism" . *Philosophy East and West*. **16** (3/4): 189–206. doi:10.2307/1397540. JSTOR 1397540.
- [149] Baggini 2003, pp. 73–74. "Atheism had its origins in Ancient Greece but did not emerge as an overt and avowed belief system until late in the Enlightenment."
- [150] Solmsen, Friedrich (1942). *Plato's Theology*. Cornell University Press. p 25.
- [151] ... *nullos esse omnino Diagoras et Theodorus Cyrenaicus* ... Cicero, Marcus Tullius: *De natura deorum*. Comments and English text by Richard D. McKirahan. Thomas Library, Bryn Mawr College, 1997, page 3. ISBN 0-929524-89-6
- [152] "religion, study of" . *Encyclopædia Britannica*. 2007. Retrieved 2007-04-02.
- [153] Bremmer, Jan. *Atheism in Antiquity*, in Martin 2006, pp. 12–13
- [154] Diogenes Laërtius, *The Lives and Opinions of Eminent Philosophers*, ii
- [155] Cicero, *Lucullus*, 121. in Reale, G., *A History of Ancient Philosophy*. SUNY Press. (1985).
- [156] Bremmer, Jan. *Atheism in Antiquity*, in Martin 2006, pp. 14–19
- [157] Brickhouse, Thomas C.; Smith, Nicholas D. (2004). *Routledge Philosophy Guidebook to Plato and the Trial of Socrates*. Routledge. p. 112. ISBN 0-41515681-5. In particular, he argues that the claim he is a complete atheist contradicts the other part of the indictment, that he introduced "new divinities" .
- [158] Fragments of Euhemerus' work in Ennius' Latin translation have been preserved in Patristic writings (e.g. by Lactantius and Eusebius of Caesarea), which all rely on earlier fragments in Diodorus 5,41–46 & 6.1. Testimonies, especially in the context of polemical criticism, are found e.g. in Callimachus, *Hymn to Zeus* 8.
- [159] Plutarch, *Moralia—Isis and Osiris* 23
- [160] "Epicurus (Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy)". *Plato.stanford.edu*. Retrieved 2013-11-10.
- [161] Stein, Gordon (Ed.) (1980). "The History of Freethought and Atheism". *An Anthology of Atheism and Rationalism*. New York: Prometheus. Retrieved 2007-APR-03.
- [162] Herbermann, Charles, ed. (1913). "Atheism". *Catholic Encyclopedia*. New York: Robert Appleton Company.
- [163] Maycock, A. L. and Ronald Knox (2003). *Inquisition from Its Establishment to the Great Schism: An Introductory Study*. ISBN 0-76617290-2.
- [164] Reynold Alleyne Nicholson, 1962, *A Literary History of the Arabs*, page 318. Routledge
- [165] *Freethought Traditions in the Islamic World* Archived February 14, 2012, at the Wayback Machine. by Fred Whitehead; also quoted in Cyril Glasse, (2001), *The New Encyclopedia of Islam*, p. 278. Rowman Altamira.
- [166] *Al-Zandaqa Wal Zanadiqa*, by Mohammad Abd-El Hamid Al-Hamad, first edition 1999, Dar Al-Taliaa Al-Jadida, Syria (Arabic)
- [167] Zdybicka 2005, p. 4
- [168] Geoffrey Blainey; *A Short History of Christianity*; Viking; 2011; p.388

- [169] Geoffrey Blainey; *A Short History of Christianity*; Viking; 2011; p.343
- [170] "Online Etymology Dictionary" . Retrieved 2013-11-26.
- [171] Winfried Schröder, in: Matthias Knutzen: *Schriften und Materialien* (2010), p. 8. See also Rececca Moore, *The Heritage of Western Humanism, Scepticism and Freethought* (2011), calling Knutzen "the first open advocate of a modern atheist perspective" [online here](#)
- [172] "Michel Onfray on Jean Meslier" . William Paterson University. Retrieved 2011-11-04.
- [173] d'Holbach, P. H. T. (1770). *The System of Nature*. 2. Retrieved 2011-04-07.
- [174] Jeremy Waldron; *God, Locke, and Equality: Christian Foundations in Locke's Political Thought*; Cambridge, UK; 2002; p.217
- [175] Geoffrey Blainey; *A Short History of Christianity*; Viking; 2011; pp. 390–391
- [176] "Reflections on the Revolution in France" . [ade-laide.edu.au](#).
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## 5.12 External links

- [Atheism at PhilPapers](#)
- [Atheism at the Indiana Philosophy Ontology Project](#)
- “Atheism and Agnosticism” . *Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy*.
- “Atheism” . *Internet Encyclopedia of Philosophy*.
- The New Atheists in *The Internet Encyclopedia of Philosophy*
- [Atheism at DMOZ](#) – Includes links to organizations and websites.
- [Positive atheism: Great Historical Writings Historical writing sorted by authors.](#)
- [Religion & Ethics—Atheism at bbc.co.uk.](#)
- [Secular Web library](#) – Library of both historical and modern writings, a comprehensive online resource for freely available material on atheism.

- **The Demand for Religion** – A study on the demographics of Atheism by Wolfgang Jagodzinski (University of Cologne) and Andrew Greeley (University of Chicago and University of Arizona).

## Chapter 6

# Agnosticism

Not to be confused with **Gnosticism**.

**Agnosticism** is the view that the existence of God or the supernatural are unknown and unknowable. \* [1] \* [2] \* [3]

According to the philosopher **William L. Rowe**, “agnosticism is the view that human reason is incapable of providing sufficient rational grounds to justify either the belief that God exists or the belief that God does not exist” . \* [2] Agnosticism is a **doctrine** or set of **tenets** \* [4] rather than a religion.

English biologist **Thomas Henry Huxley** coined the word “agnostic” in 1869. Earlier thinkers, however, had written works that promoted agnostic points of view, such as **Sanjaya Belatthaputta**, a 5th-century BCE Indian philosopher who expressed agnosticism about any afterlife, \* [5] \* [6] \* [7] and **Protagoras**, a 5th-century BCE Greek philosopher who expressed agnosticism about the existence of “the gods” . \* [8] The **Nasadiya Sukta** in the **Rigveda** is agnostic about the origin of the universe. \* [9] \* [10] \* [11]

### 6.1 Defining agnosticism

Agnosticism is of the essence of science, whether ancient or modern. It simply means that a man shall not say he knows or believes that which he has no scientific grounds for professing to know or believe.

Consequently, agnosticism puts aside not only the greater part of popular theology, but also the greater part of anti-theology. On the whole, the “bosh” of heterodoxy is more offensive to me than that of orthodoxy, because heterodoxy professes to be guided by reason and science, and orthodoxy does not. \* [12]

—Thomas Henry Huxley

That which Agnostics deny and repudiate, as immoral, is the contrary doctrine, that there are propositions which men ought to believe, without logically satisfactory evidence;

and that reprobation ought to attach to the profession of disbelief in such inadequately supported propositions. \* [13]

—Thomas Henry Huxley

Agnosticism, in fact, is not a creed, but a method, the essence of which lies in the rigorous application of a single principle ... Positively the principle may be expressed: In matters of the intellect, follow your reason as far as it will take you, without regard to any other consideration. And negatively: In matters of the intellect do not pretend that conclusions are certain which are not demonstrated or demonstrable. \* [14] \* [15] \* [16]

—Thomas Henry Huxley

Being a scientist, above all else, **Huxley** presented agnosticism as a form of demarcation. A hypothesis with no supporting objective, testable evidence is not an objective, scientific claim. As such, there would be no way to test said hypotheses, leaving the results inconclusive. His agnosticism was not compatible with forming a belief as to the truth, or falsehood, of the claim at hand. **Karl Popper** would also describe himself as an agnostic. \* [17] According to philosopher **William L. Rowe**, in this strict sense, agnosticism is the view that human reason is incapable of providing sufficient rational grounds to justify either the belief that God exists or the belief that God does not exist. \* [2]

Others have redefined this concept, making it compatible with forming a belief, and only incompatible with absolute certainty. **George H. Smith**, while admitting that the narrow definition of atheist was the common usage definition of that word, \* [18] and admitting that the broad definition of agnostic was the common usage definition of that word, \* [19] promoted broadening the definition of atheist and narrowing the definition of agnostic. Smith rejects agnosticism as a third alternative to theism and atheism and promotes terms such as **agnostic atheism** (the view of those who do not *believe* in the existence of any deity, but do not claim to *know* if a deity does or does

not exist) and **agnostic theism** (the view of those who do not claim to *know* of the existence of any deity, but still *believe* in such an existence). \* [20] \* [21] \* [22]

### 6.1.1 Etymology

*Agnostic* (from **Ancient Greek** ἀ- (*a-*), meaning 'without', and γνῶσις (*gnōsis*), meaning 'knowledge') was used by Thomas Henry Huxley in a speech at a meeting of the Metaphysical Society in 1869 to describe his philosophy, which rejects all claims of spiritual or mystical knowledge. \* [23] \* [24]

Early **Christian** church leaders used the **Greek** word *gnosis* (knowledge) to describe “spiritual knowledge”. Agnosticism is not to be confused with religious views opposing the ancient religious movement of **Gnosticism** in particular; Huxley used the term in a broader, more abstract sense. \* [25] Huxley identified agnosticism not as a creed but rather as a method of **skeptical**, evidence-based inquiry. \* [26]

In recent years, scientific literature dealing with neuroscience and psychology has used the word to mean “not knowable”. \* [27] In technical and marketing literature, “agnostic” can also mean independence from some parameters—for example, “platform agnostic” \* [28] or “hardware agnostic”. \* [29]

### 6.1.2 Qualifying agnosticism

**Scottish Enlightenment** philosopher **David Hume** contended that meaningful statements about the universe are always qualified by some degree of doubt. He asserted that the fallibility of human beings means that they cannot obtain absolute certainty except in trivial cases where a statement is true by definition (e.g. **tautologies** such as “all bachelors are unmarried” or “all triangles have three corners”). \* [30]

### 6.1.3 Types

**Strong agnosticism** (also called “hard”, “closed”, “strict”, or “permanent agnosticism”)

The view that the question of the existence or nonexistence of a deity or deities, and the nature of ultimate reality is unknowable by reason of our natural inability to verify any experience with anything but another subjective experience. A strong agnostic would say, “I cannot know whether a deity exists or not, and neither can you.” \* [31] \* [32] \* [33]

**Weak agnosticism** (also called “soft”, “open”, “empirical”, or “temporal agnosticism”)

The view that the existence or nonexistence of any deities is currently unknown but is not necessarily unknowable; therefore, one will withhold judgment until evidence, if any, becomes available. A

weak agnostic would say, “I don't know whether any deities exist or not, but maybe one day, if there is evidence, we can find something out.” \* [31] \* [32] \* [33]

**Apathetic agnosticism** The view that no amount of debate can prove or disprove the existence of one or more deities, and if one or more deities exist, they do not appear to be concerned about the fate of humans. Therefore, their existence has little to no impact on personal human affairs and should be of little interest. \* [34] \* [35] \* [36]

## 6.2 History

### 6.2.1 Greek philosophy

Agnostic thought, in the form of **skepticism**, emerged as a formal philosophical position in **ancient Greece**. Its proponents included **Protagoras**, **Pyrrho**, **Carneades**, **Sextus Empiricus** \* [37] and, to some degree, **Socrates**, who was a strong advocate for a skeptical approach to **epistemology**. \* [38]

**Pyrrho** said that we should refrain from making judgment as we can never know the true reality. According to Pyrrho, having opinion was possible, but certainty and knowledge are impossible. \* [39] **Carneades** was also a skeptic in relation to all knowledge claims. He proposed a probability theory, however. According to him, certainty could never be attained. \* [40] **Protagoras** rejected the conventional accounts of the gods. He said: \* [8]

Concerning the gods, I have no means of knowing whether they exist or not or of what sort they may be. Many things prevent knowledge including the obscurity of the subject and the brevity of human life.

### 6.2.2 Hindu philosophy

See also: **Sanjaya Belatthaputta**

Throughout the history of **Hinduism** there has been a strong tradition of philosophic speculation and skepticism. \* [41] \* [42]

The **Rig Veda** takes an agnostic view on the fundamental question of how the universe and the gods were created. **Nasadiya Sukta** (*Creation Hymn*) in the tenth chapter of the **Rig Veda** says: \* [43] \* [44] \* [45]

Who really knows?  
Who will here proclaim it?  
Whence was it produced? Whence is this creation?  
The gods came afterwards, with the creation of



this universe.  
Who then knows whence it has arisen?

—Denis Diderot

### 6.2.3 Hume, Kant, and Kierkegaard

Aristotle,\*[46] Anselm,\*[47]\*[48] Aquinas,\*[49]\*[50] and Descartes\*[51] presented arguments attempting to rationally prove the existence of God. The skeptical empiricism of David Hume, the antinomies of Immanuel Kant, and the existential philosophy of Søren Kierkegaard convinced many later philosophers to abandon these attempts, regarding it impossible to construct any unassailable proof for the existence or non-existence of God.\*[52]

In his 1844 book, *Philosophical Fragments*, Kierkegaard writes:\*[53]

Let us call this unknown something: God. It is nothing more than a name we assign to it. The idea of demonstrating that this unknown something (God) exists, could scarcely suggest itself to Reason. For if God does not exist it would of course be impossible to prove it; and if he does exist it would be folly to attempt it. For at the very outset, in beginning my proof, I would have presupposed it, not as doubtful but as certain (a presupposition is never doubtful, for the very reason that it is a presupposition), since otherwise I would not begin, readily understanding that the whole would be impossible if he did not exist. But if when I speak of proving God's existence I mean that I propose to prove that the Unknown, which exists, is God, then I express myself unfortunately. For in that case I do not prove anything, least of all an existence, but merely develop the content of a conception.

Hume was Huxley's favourite philosopher, calling him "the Prince of Agnostics".\*[54] Diderot wrote to his mistress, telling of a visit by Hume to the Baron D'Holbach, and describing how a word for the position that Huxley would later describe as agnosticism didn't seem to exist, or at least wasn't common knowledge, at the time.

The first time that M. Hume found himself at the table of the Baron, he was seated beside him. I don't know for what purpose the English philosopher took it into his head to remark to the Baron that he did not believe in atheists, that he had never seen any. The Baron said to him: "Count how many we are here." We are eighteen. The Baron added: "It isn't too bad a showing to be able to point out to you fifteen at once: the three others haven't made up their minds."\*[55]

### 6.2.4 Thomas Henry Huxley



Thomas Henry Huxley

Agnostic views are as old as philosophical skepticism, but the terms agnostic and agnosticism were created by Huxley to sum up his thoughts on contemporary developments of metaphysics about the "unconditioned" (William Hamilton) and the "unknowable" (Herbert Spencer). Though Huxley began to use the term "agnostic" in 1869, his opinions had taken shape some time before that date. In a letter of September 23, 1860, to Charles Kingsley, Huxley discussed his views extensively:\*[56]\*[57]

I neither affirm nor deny the immortality of man. I see no reason for believing it, but, on the other hand, I have no means of disproving it. I have no *a priori* objections to the doctrine. No man who has to deal daily and hourly with nature can trouble himself about *a priori* difficulties. Give me such evidence as would justify me in believing in anything else, and I will believe that. Why should I not? It is not half so wonderful as the conservation of force or the indestructibility of matter ...

It is no use to talk to me of analogies and probabilities. I know what I mean when I say I believe in the law of the inverse squares, and I

will not rest my life and my hopes upon weaker convictions ...

That my personality is the surest thing I know may be true. But the attempt to conceive what it is leads me into mere verbal subtleties. I have champed up all that chaff about the ego and the non-ego, noumena and phenomena, and all the rest of it, too often not to know that in attempting even to think of these questions, the human intellect flounders at once out of its depth.

And again, to the same correspondent, May 6, 1863: <sup>\*</sup>[58]

I have never had the least sympathy with the *a priori* reasons against orthodoxy, and I have by nature and disposition the greatest possible antipathy to all the atheistic and infidel school. Nevertheless I know that I am, in spite of myself, exactly what the Christian would call, and, so far as I can see, is justified in calling, atheist and infidel. I cannot see one shadow or tittle of evidence that the great unknown underlying the phenomenon of the universe stands to us in the relation of a Father [who] loves us and cares for us as Christianity asserts. So with regard to the other great Christian dogmas, immortality of soul and future state of rewards and punishments, what possible objection can I—who am compelled perforce to believe in the immortality of what we call Matter and Force, and in a very unmistakable present state of rewards and punishments for our deeds—have to these doctrines? Give me a scintilla of evidence, and I am ready to jump at them.

Of the origin of the name agnostic to describe this attitude, Huxley gave the following account: <sup>\*</sup>[59]

When I reached intellectual maturity and began to ask myself whether I was an atheist, a theist, or a pantheist; a materialist or an idealist; Christian or a freethinker; I found that the more I learned and reflected, the less ready was the answer; until, at last, I came to the conclusion that I had neither art nor part with any of these denominations, except the last. The one thing in which most of these good people were agreed was the one thing in which I differed from them. They were quite sure they had attained a certain “gnosis”—had, more or less successfully, solved the problem of existence; while I was quite sure I had not, and had a pretty strong conviction that the problem was insoluble. And, with Hume and Kant on my side, I could not think myself presumptuous in holding fast by that opinion ...

So I took thought, and invented what I conceived to be the appropriate title of “agnostic”. It came into my head as suggestively antithetic to the “gnostic” of Church history, who professed to know so much about the very things of which I was ignorant. ... To my great satisfaction the term took.

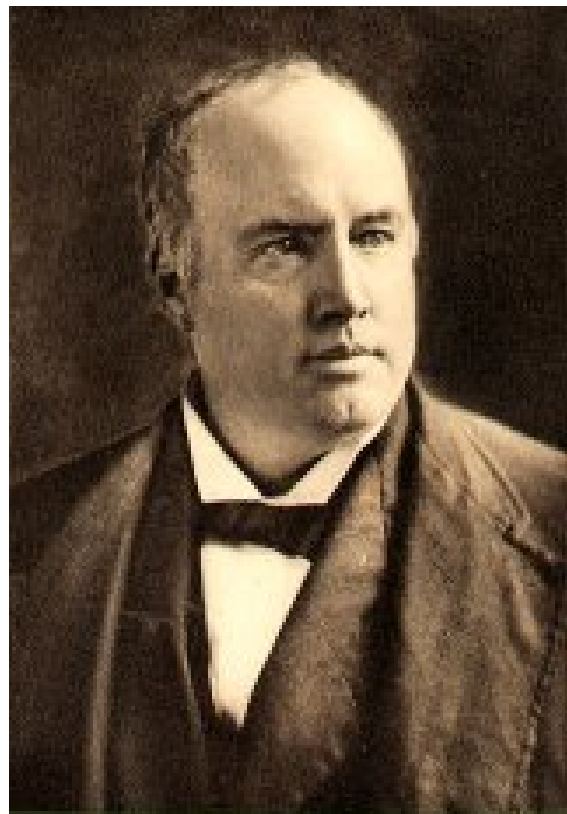
In 1889, Huxley wrote:

Therefore, although it be, as I believe, demonstrable that we have no real knowledge of the authorship, or of the date of composition of the Gospels, as they have come down to us, and that nothing better than more or less probable guesses can be arrived at on that subject. <sup>\*</sup>[60]

### 6.2.5 William Stewart Ross

William Stewart Ross wrote under the name of Saladin. He championed agnosticism in opposition to the **atheism** of **Charles Bradlaugh** as an open-ended spiritual exploration. <sup>\*</sup>[61] In *Why I am an Agnostic* (c. 1889) he claims that agnosticism is “the very reverse of atheism”. <sup>\*</sup>[62]

### 6.2.6 Robert G. Ingersoll



Robert G. Ingersoll

Robert G. Ingersoll, an Illinois lawyer and politician who evolved into a well-known and sought-after orator in 19th-century America, has been referred to as the “Great Agnostic” .\*[63]

In an 1896 lecture titled *Why I Am An Agnostic*, Ingersoll related why he was an agnostic:\*[64]

Is there a supernatural power—an arbitrary mind—an enthroned God—a supreme will that sways the tides and currents of the world—to which all causes bow? I do not deny. I do not know—but I do not believe. I believe that the natural is supreme—that from the infinite chain no link can be lost or broken—that there is no supernatural power that can answer prayer—no power that worship can persuade or change—no power that cares for man.

I believe that with infinite arms Nature embraces the all—that there is no interference—no chance—that behind every event are the necessary and countless causes, and that beyond every event will be and must be the necessary and countless effects.

Is there a God? I do not know. Is man immortal? I do not know. One thing I do know, and that is, that neither hope, nor fear, belief, nor denial, can change the fact. It is as it is, and it will be as it must be.

In the conclusion of the speech he simply sums up the agnostic position as:\*[64]

We can be as honest as we are ignorant. If we are, when asked what is beyond the horizon of the known, we must say that we do not know.

See also: [Physical determinism](#)

## 6.2.7 Bertrand Russell

Bertrand Russell's pamphlet, *Why I Am Not a Christian*, based on a speech delivered in 1927 and later included in a book of the same title, is considered a classic statement of agnosticism.\*[65]\*[65]\*[66] He calls upon his readers to “stand on their own two feet and look fair and square at the world with a fearless attitude and a free intelligence” .\*[67]

In 1939, Russell gave a lecture on *The existence and nature of God*, in which he characterized himself as an atheist. He said:\*[68]

The existence and nature of God is a subject of which I can discuss only half. If one arrives at a negative conclusion concerning the first part of the question, the second part of the



*Bertrand Russell*

question does not arise; and my position, as you may have gathered, is a negative one on this matter.

However, later in the same lecture, discussing modern non-anthropomorphic concepts of God, Russell states:\*[69]

That sort of God is, I think, not one that can actually be disproved, as I think the omnipotent and benevolent creator can.

In Russell's 1947 pamphlet, *Am I An Atheist or an Agnostic?* (subtitled *A Plea For Tolerance in the Face of New Dogmas*), he ruminates on the problem of what to call himself:\*[70]\*[71]

As a philosopher, if I were speaking to a purely philosophic audience I should say that I ought to describe myself as an Agnostic, because I do not think that there is a conclusive argument by which one can prove that there is not a God. On the other hand, if I am to convey the right impression to the ordinary man in the street I think I ought to say that I am an Atheist, because when I say that I cannot prove that there is not a God, I ought to add equally that I cannot prove that there are not the Homeric gods.

In his 1953 essay, *What Is An Agnostic?* Russell states:\*[72]\*[73]

An agnostic thinks it impossible to know the truth in matters such as God and the future life with which Christianity and other religions are concerned. Or, if not impossible, at least impossible at the present time.

Are Agnostics Atheists?

No. An atheist, like a Christian, holds that we can know whether or not there is a God. The Christian holds that we can know there is a God; the atheist, that we can know there is not. The Agnostic suspends judgment, saying that there are not sufficient grounds either for affirmation or for denial.

Later in the essay, Russell adds: \* [74]

I think that if I heard a voice from the sky predicting all that was going to happen to me during the next twenty-four hours, including events that would have seemed highly improbable, and if all these events then produced to happen, I might perhaps be convinced at least of the existence of some superhuman intelligence.

### 6.2.8 Leslie Weatherhead

See also: [Christian agnosticism](#)

In 1965 Christian theologian [Leslie Weatherhead](#) published *The Christian Agnostic*, in which he argues: \* [67] \* [75]

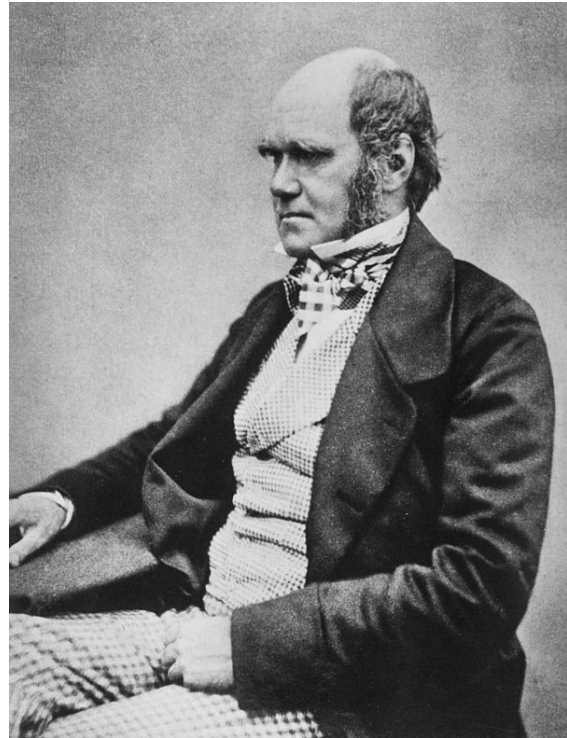
... many professing agnostics are nearer belief in the true God than are many conventional church-goers who believe in a body that does not exist whom they miscall God.

Although radical and unpalatable to conventional theologians, Weatherhead's *agnosticism* falls far short of Huxley's, and short even of *weak agnosticism*: \* [67] \* [75]

Of course, the human soul will always have the power to reject God, for choice is essential to its nature, but I cannot believe that anyone will finally do this.

### 6.2.9 Charles Darwin

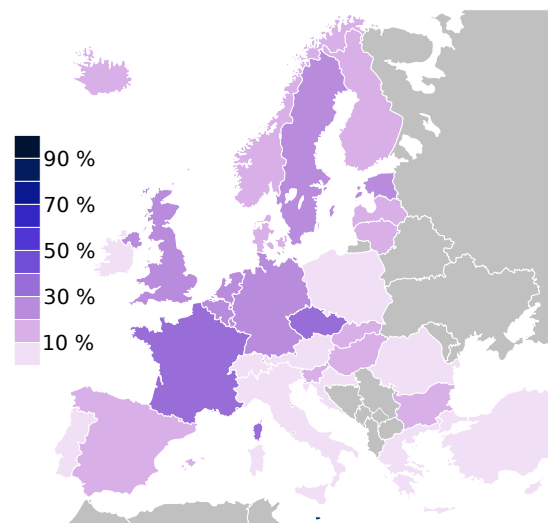
Raised in a religious environment, [Charles Darwin](#) studied to be an Anglican clergyman. While eventually doubting parts of his faith, Darwin continued to help in church affairs, even while avoiding church attendance. Darwin stated that it would be “absurd to doubt that a man might be an ardent theist and an evolutionist” . \* [76] \* [77]



*Charles Darwin*

Although reticent about his religious views, in 1879 he wrote that “I have never been an atheist in the sense of denying the existence of a God. – I think that generally ... an agnostic would be the most correct description of my state of mind.” \* [76] \* [78]

## 6.3 Demographics



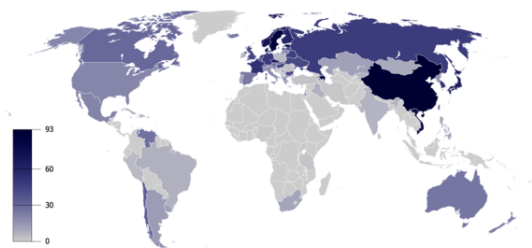
Percentage of people in various European countries who said: “I don't believe there is any sort of spirit, God or life force.” (2005) \* [79]



**Demographic** research services normally do not differentiate between various types of non-religious respondents, so agnostics are often classified in the same category as **atheists** or other **non-religious** people. <sup>[80]</sup>

A 2010 survey published in *Encyclopædia Britannica* found that the non-religious people or the agnostics made up about 9.6% of the world's population. <sup>[81]</sup> A November–December 2006 poll published in the *Financial Times* gives rates for the United States and five European countries. The rates of agnosticism in the United States were at 14%, while the rates of agnosticism in the European countries surveyed were considerably higher: Italy (20%), Spain (30%), Great Britain (35%), Germany (25%), and France (32%). <sup>[82]</sup>

A study conducted by the **Pew Research Center** found that about 16% of the world's people, the third largest group after **Christianity** and **Islam**, have no religious affiliation. <sup>[83]</sup> According to a 2012 report by the Pew Research Center, agnostics made up 3.3% of the US adult population. <sup>[84]</sup> In the *U.S. Religious Landscape Survey*, conducted by the Pew Research Center, 55% of agnostic respondents expressed “a belief in God or a universal spirit” , <sup>[85]</sup> whereas 41% stated that they thought that they felt a tension “being non-religious in a society where most people are religious” . <sup>[86]</sup>



*Proportion of atheists and agnostics around the world*

According to the 2011 **Australian Bureau of Statistics**, 22% of **Australians** have “no religion” , a category that includes agnostics. <sup>[87]</sup> Between 64% and 65% <sup>[88]</sup> of **Japanese** and up to 81% <sup>[89]</sup> of **Vietnamese** are atheists, agnostics, or do not believe in a god. An official **European Union** survey reported that 3% of the EU population is unsure about their belief in a god or spirit. <sup>[90]</sup>

## 6.4 Criticism

Agnosticism is criticized from a variety of standpoints. Some religious thinkers see agnosticism as limiting the mind's capacity to know reality to **materialism**. Some atheists criticize the use of the term agnosticism as functionally indistinguishable from atheism; this results in frequent criticisms of those who adopt the term as avoiding the atheist label. <sup>[24]</sup>

### 6.4.1 Theistic

Theistic critics claim that agnosticism is impossible in practice, since a person can live only either as if God did not exist (*etsi deus non-daretur*), or as if God did exist (*etsi deus daretur*). <sup>[91]</sup> <sup>[92]</sup> <sup>[93]</sup>

Religious scholars such as Laurence B. Brown criticize the misuse of the word agnosticism, claiming that it has become one of the most misapplied terms in metaphysics. Brown raises the question, “You claim that nothing can be known with certainty ... how, then, can you be so sure?” <sup>[94]</sup> <sup>[95]</sup>

#### Christian

According to **Pope Benedict XVI**, strong agnosticism in particular contradicts itself in affirming the power of reason to know scientific truth. <sup>[96]</sup> <sup>[97]</sup> He blames the exclusion of reasoning from religion and ethics for dangerous pathologies such as crimes against humanity and ecological disasters. <sup>[96]</sup> <sup>[97]</sup> <sup>[98]</sup> “Agnosticism” , said Ratzinger, “is always the fruit of a refusal of that knowledge which is in fact offered to man ... The knowledge of God has always existed” . <sup>[97]</sup> He asserted that agnosticism is a choice of comfort, pride, dominion, and utility over truth, and is opposed by the following attitudes: the keenest self-criticism, humble listening to the whole of existence, the persistent patience and self-correction of the **scientific method**, a readiness to be purified by the truth. <sup>[96]</sup>

The **Catholic Church** sees merit in examining what it calls “partial agnosticism” , specifically those systems that “do not aim at constructing a complete philosophy of the unknowable, but at excluding special kinds of truth, notably religious, from the domain of knowledge” . <sup>[99]</sup> However, the Church is historically opposed to a full denial of the capacity of human reason to know God. The **Council of the Vatican** declares, “God, the beginning and end of all, can, by the natural light of human reason, be known with certainty from the works of creation” . <sup>[99]</sup>

**Blaise Pascal** argued that even if there were truly no evidence for God, agnostics should consider what is now known as **Pascal's Wager**: the infinite expected value of acknowledging God is always greater than the finite expected value of not acknowledging his existence, and thus it is a safer “bet” to choose God. <sup>[100]</sup>

**Peter Kreeft** and **Ronald Tacelli** cited 20 arguments for God's existence, <sup>[101]</sup> asserting that any demand for evidence testable in a laboratory is in effect asking God, the supreme being, to become man's servant. <sup>[102]</sup>

### 6.4.2 Atheistic

According to **Richard Dawkins**, a distinction between agnosticism and atheism is unwieldy and depends on how

close to zero a person is willing to rate the probability of existence for any given god-like entity. About himself, Dawkins continues, “I am agnostic only to the extent that I am agnostic about fairies at the bottom of the garden.” \* [103] Dawkins also identifies two categories of agnostics; “Temporary Agnostics in Practice” (TAPs), and “Permanent Agnostics in Principle” (PAPs). Dawkins considers temporary agnosticism an entirely reasonable position, but views permanent agnosticism as “fence-sitting, intellectual cowardice” . \* [104]

## 6.5 Related concepts

**Ignosticism** is the view that a coherent definition of a deity must be put forward before the question of the existence of a deity can be meaningfully discussed. If the chosen definition is not coherent, the ignostic holds the **noncognitivist** view that the existence of a deity is meaningless or empirically untestable. \* [105]

A.J. Ayer, Theodore Drange, and other philosophers see both atheism and agnosticism as incompatible with ignosticism on the grounds that atheism and agnosticism accept “a deity exists” as a meaningful proposition that can be argued for or against. \* [106] \* [107]

## 6.6 See also

- **Apatheism**
- **Apophatic theology**
- *Asimov's Guide to the Bible*
- **Avidyā (Buddhism)**
- **Existentialism**
- **Ietsism**
- *Ignoramus et ignorabimus*
- **Instrumentalism**
- **Laïcité**
- **List of agnostics**
- **Objectivism (Ayn Rand)**
- **Possibilianism**
- **Rationalism**
- **Relativism**
- **Religiosity**
- **Religious skepticism**
- **Russell's teapot**

- **Scientism**
- **Solipsism**
- **Subjectivism**
- **Unknown God**

## 6.7 References

### Notes

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- [2] Rowe, William L. (1998). “Agnosticism” . In Edward Craig. *Routledge Encyclopedia of Philosophy*. Taylor & Francis. ISBN 978-0-415-07310-3. In the popular sense, an agnostic is someone who neither believes nor disbelieves in God, whereas an atheist disbelieves in God. In the strict sense, however, agnosticism is the view that human reason is incapable of providing sufficient rational grounds to justify either the belief that God exists or the belief that God does not exist. In so far as one holds that our beliefs are rational only if they are sufficiently supported by human reason, the person who accepts the philosophical position of agnosticism will hold that neither the belief that God exists nor the belief that God does not exist is rational.
- [3] “agnostic, agnosticism” . *OED Online*, 3rd ed. Oxford University Press. September 2012. **agnostic**. : **A**. n[oun]. :# A person who believes that nothing is known or can be known of immaterial things, especially of the existence or nature of God. :# In extended use: a person who is not persuaded by or committed to a particular point of view; a sceptic. Also: person of indeterminate ideology or conviction; an equivocator. : **B**. adj[ective]. :# Of or relating to the belief that the existence of anything beyond and behind material phenomena is unknown and (as far as can be judged) unknowable. Also: holding this belief. :# a. In extended use: not committed to or persuaded by a particular point of view; sceptical. Also: politically or ideologically unaligned; non-partisan, equivocal. **agnosticism** n. The doctrine or tenets of agnostics with regard to the existence of anything beyond and behind material phenomena or to knowledge of a First Cause or God.
- [4] “agnosticism” . *Oxford English Dictionary* (3rd ed.). Oxford University Press. September 2005. (Subscription or UK public library membership required.)
- [5] “Samaññaphala Sutta: The Fruits of the Contemplative Life” . a part of the Digha Nikaya translated in 1997 by Thanissaro Bhikkhu. Archived from the original on February 9, 2014. If you ask me if there exists another world (after death), ... I don't think so. I don't think in that way. I don't think otherwise. I don't think not. I don't think not not.

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- [8] *The Internet Encyclopedia of Philosophy – Protagoras (c. 490 – c. 420 BCE)*. Archived from the original on February 2, 2014. Retrieved July 22, 2013. While the pious might wish to look to the gods to provide absolute moral guidance in the relativistic universe of the Sophistic Enlightenment, that certainty also was cast into doubt by philosophic and sophistic thinkers, who pointed out the absurdity and immorality of the conventional epic accounts of the gods. Protagoras' prose treatise about the gods began "Concerning the gods, I have no means of knowing whether they exist or not or of what sort they may be. Many things prevent knowledge including the obscurity of the subject and the brevity of human life."
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- [13] Thomas Huxley, "Agnosticism and Christianity", *Collected Essays V*, 1899
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- [15] Huxley, Thomas Henry (April 1889). "Agnosticism". *The Popular Science Monthly*. New York: D. Appleton & Company. **34** (46): 768. Wikisource has the full text of the article [here](#).
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- [19] George H. Smith, Atheism: The Case Against God, pg. 12
- [20] Smith, George H (1979). *Atheism: The Case Against God*. pp. 10–11. ISBN 978-0-87975-124-1. Properly considered, agnosticism is not a third alternative to theism and atheism because it is concerned with a different aspect of religious belief. Theism and atheism refer to the presence or absence of belief in a god; agnosticism refers to the impossibility of knowledge with regard to a god or supernatural being. The term *agnostic* does not, in itself, indicate whether or not one believes in a god. Agnosticism can be either theistic or atheistic.
- [21] Harrison, Alexander James (1894). *The Ascent of Faith: or, the Grounds of Certainty in Science and Religion*. London: Hodder and Stroughton. p. 21. OCLC 7234849. OL 21834002M. Let Agnostic Theism stand for that kind of Agnosticism which admits a Divine existence; Agnostic Atheism for that kind of Agnosticism which thinks it does not.
- [22] Barker, Dan (2008). *Godless: How an Evangelical Preacher Became One of America's Leading Atheists*. New York: Ulysses Press. p. 96. ISBN 978-1-56975-677-5. OL 24313839M. People are invariably surprised to hear me say I am both an atheist and an agnostic, as if this somehow weakens my certainty. I usually reply with a question like, "Well, are you a Republican or an American?" The two words serve different concepts and are not mutually exclusive. Agnosticism addresses knowledge; atheism addresses belief. The agnostic says, "I don't have a knowledge that God exists." The atheist says, "I don't have a belief that God exists." You can say both things at the same time. Some agnostics are atheistic and some are theistic.
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## 6.8 External links

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- Agnosticism at PhilPapers
- Agnosticism at the Indiana Philosophy Ontology Project
- Albert Einstein on Religion Shapell Manuscript Foundation
- Why I Am An Agnostic by Robert G. Ingersoll, [1896].
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## Chapter 7

# Anarchism

“Anarchist” and “Anarchists” redirect here. For the fictional character, see [Anarchist \(comics\)](#). For other uses, see [Anarchists \(disambiguation\)](#).

**Anarchism** is a political philosophy that advocates self-governed societies based on voluntary institutions. These are often described as [stateless societies](#),<sup>[1][2][3][4]</sup> although several authors have defined them more specifically as institutions based on non-hierarchical [free associations](#).<sup>[5][6][7][8]</sup> Anarchism holds the state to be undesirable, unnecessary, and harmful.<sup>[9][10]</sup>

While [anti-statism](#) is central,<sup>[11]</sup> anarchism generally entails opposing [authority](#) or [hierarchical organisation](#) in the conduct of all human relations, including, but not limited to, the state system. Anarchism is usually considered a radical [left-wing ideology](#),<sup>[12][13]</sup> and much of [anarchist economics](#) and [anarchist legal philosophy](#) reflects [anti-authoritarian interpretations](#) of [communism](#), [collectivism](#), [syndicalism](#), [mutualism](#), or [participatory economics](#).<sup>[14]</sup>

Anarchism does not offer a fixed body of doctrine from a single particular world view, instead fluxing and flowing as a philosophy.<sup>[15]</sup> Many types and traditions of anarchism exist, not all of which are mutually exclusive.<sup>[16]</sup> [Anarchist schools of thought](#) can differ fundamentally, supporting anything from extreme [individualism](#) to complete [collectivism](#).<sup>[10]</sup> Strains of anarchism have often been divided into the categories of [social](#) and [individualist anarchism](#) or similar dual classifications.<sup>[17][18]</sup>

## 7.1 Etymology and terminology

See also: [Anarchist terminology](#)

The term *anarchism* is a compound word composed from the word *anarchy* and the suffix *-ism*,<sup>[19]</sup> themselves derived respectively from the Greek ἀναρχία,<sup>[20]</sup> i.e. *an-archy*<sup>[21][22][23]</sup> (from ἀναρχος, *anarchos*, meaning “one without rulers”;<sup>[24]</sup> from the privative prefix ἀν- (*an-*, i.e. “without”) and ἀρχός, *archos*, i.e. “leader”, “ruler”;<sup>[25]</sup> (cf. *archon* or ἀρχή, *arkhē*, i.e. “authority”, “sovereignty”, “realm”, “magistracy”)<sup>[26]</sup> and

the suffix -ισμός or -ισμα (*-ismos*, *-isma*, from the verbal infinitive suffix -ίζειν, *-izein*).<sup>[27]</sup> The first known use of this word was in 1539.<sup>[28]</sup> Various factions within the [French Revolution](#) labelled opponents as anarchists (as Robespierre did the Hébertists)<sup>[29]</sup> although few shared many views of later anarchists. There would be many revolutionaries of the early nineteenth century who contributed to the anarchist doctrines of the next generation, such as [William Godwin](#) and [Wilhelm Weitling](#), but they did not use the word *anarchist* or *anarchism* in describing themselves or their beliefs.<sup>[30]</sup>

The first political philosopher to call himself an anarchist was [Pierre-Joseph Proudhon](#), marking the formal birth of anarchism in the mid-nineteenth century. Since the 1890s, and beginning in France,<sup>[31]</sup> the term *libertarianism* has often been used as a synonym for anarchism<sup>[32]</sup> and was used almost exclusively in this sense until the 1950s in the United States;<sup>[33]</sup> its use as a synonym is still common outside the United States.<sup>[34]</sup> On the other hand, some use *libertarianism* to refer to individualistic free-market philosophy only, referring to free-market anarchism as *libertarian anarchism*.<sup>[35][36]</sup>

## 7.2 History

Main article: [History of anarchism](#)

### 7.2.1 Origins

The earliest<sup>[37]</sup> anarchist themes can be found in the 6th century BC, among the works of Taoist philosopher Laozi,<sup>[38]</sup> and in later centuries by Zhuangzi and Bao Jingyan.<sup>[39]</sup> Zhuangzi's philosophy has been described by various sources as anarchist.<sup>[40][41][42][43]</sup> Zhuangzi wrote, “A petty thief is put in jail. A great brigand becomes a ruler of a Nation.”<sup>[44]</sup> Diogenes of Sinope and the Cynics, and their contemporary Zeno of Citium, the founder of Stoicism, also introduced similar topics.<sup>[38][45]</sup> Jesus is sometimes considered the first anarchist in the [Christian anarchist](#) tradition. Georges Lechartier wrote that “The true founder of anarchy was Jesus Christ and ... the first anarchist society was that



Woodcut from a Diggers document by William Everard

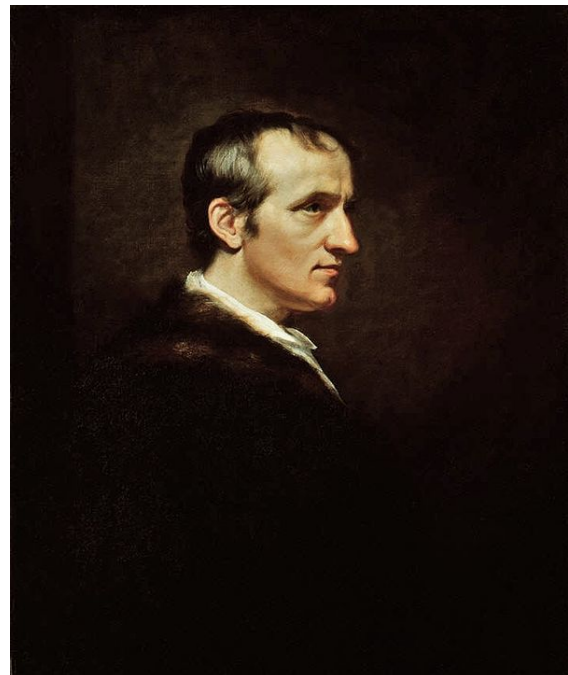
of the apostles.” \* [46] In early Islamic history, some manifestations of anarchic thought are found during the Islamic civil war over the Caliphate, where the Kharijites insisted that the imamate is a right for each individual within the Islamic society. \* [47] Later, some Muslim scholars, such as Amer al-Basri \* [48] and Abu Hanifa, \* [49] led movements of boycotting the rulers, paving the way to the *waqf* (endowments) tradition, which served as an alternative to and asylum from the centralised authorities of the emirs. But such interpretations reverberate subversive religious conceptions like the aforementioned seemingly anarchistic Taoist teachings and that of other anti-authoritarian religious traditions creating a complex relationship regarding the question as to whether or not anarchism and religion are compatible. This is exemplified when the glorification of the state is viewed as a form of sinful idolatry. \* [50] \* [51]

The French renaissance political philosopher Étienne de La Boétie wrote in his most famous work the *Discourse on Voluntary Servitude* what some historians consider an important anarchist precedent. \* [52] \* [53] The radical Protestant Christian Gerrard Winstanley and his group the Diggers are cited by various authors as proposing anarchist social measures in the 17th century in England. \* [54] \* [55] \* [56] The term “anarchist” first entered the English language in 1642, during the English Civil War, as a term of abuse, used by Royalists against their Roundhead opponents. \* [57] By the time of the French Revolution some, such as the *Enragés*, began to use the term positively, \* [58] in opposition to Jacobin centralisation of power, seeing “revolutionary government” as oxymoronic. \* [57] By the turn of the 19th century, the English word “anarchism” had lost its initial negative

connotation. \* [57]

Modern anarchism emerged from the secular or religious thought of the Enlightenment, particularly Jean-Jacques Rousseau's arguments for the moral centrality of freedom. \* [59]

As part of the political turmoil of the 1790s in the wake of the French Revolution, William Godwin developed the first expression of modern anarchist thought. \* [60] \* [61] Godwin was, according to Peter Kropotkin, “the first to formulate the political and economical conceptions of anarchism, even though he did not give that name to the ideas developed in his work” , \* [38] while Godwin attached his anarchist ideas to an early Edmund Burke. \* [62]



William Godwin, “the first to formulate the political and economical conceptions of anarchism, even though he did not give that name to the ideas developed in his work” . \* [38]

Godwin is generally regarded as the founder of the school of thought known as 'philosophical anarchism'. He argued in *Political Justice* (1793) \* [61] \* [63] that government has an inherently malevolent influence on society, and that it perpetuates dependency and ignorance. He thought that the spread of the use of reason to the masses would eventually cause government to wither away as an unnecessary force. Although he did not accord the state with moral legitimacy, he was against the use of revolutionary tactics for removing the government from power. Rather, he advocated for its replacement through a process of peaceful evolution. \* [61] \* [64]

His aversion to the imposition of a rules-based society led him to denounce, as a manifestation of the people's 'mental enslavement', the foundations of law, property rights and even the institution of marriage. He considered the



basic foundations of society as constraining the natural development of individuals to use their powers of reasoning to arrive at a mutually beneficial method of social organisation. In each case, government and its institutions are shown to constrain the development of our capacity to live wholly in accordance with the full and free exercise of private judgement.

The French Pierre-Joseph Proudhon is regarded as the first *self-proclaimed* anarchist, a label he adopted in his groundbreaking work, *What is Property?*, published in 1840. It is for this reason that some claim Proudhon as the founder of modern anarchist theory.\*[65] He developed the theory of *spontaneous order* in society, where organisation emerges without a central coordinator imposing its own idea of order against the wills of individuals acting in their own interests; his famous quote on the matter is, “Liberty is the mother, not the daughter, of order.” In *What is Property?* Proudhon answers with the famous accusation “*Property is theft*.” In this work, he opposed the institution of decreed “property” (*propriété*), where owners have complete rights to “use and abuse” their property as they wish.\*[66] He contrasted this with what he called “possession,” or limited ownership of resources and goods only while in more or less continuous use. Later, however, Proudhon added that “Property is Liberty,” and argued that it was a bulwark against state power.\*[67] His opposition to the state, organised religion, and certain capitalist practices inspired subsequent anarchists, and made him one of the leading social thinkers of his time.

The anarcho-communist Joseph Déjacque was the first person to describe himself as “libertarian”.\*[68] Unlike Pierre-Joseph Proudhon, he argued that, “it is not the product of his or her labour that the worker has a right to, but to the satisfaction of his or her needs, whatever may be their nature.”\*[69] In 1844 in Germany the post-hegelian philosopher Max Stirner published the book, *The Ego and Its Own*, which would later be considered an influential early text of individualist anarchism.\*[70] French anarchists active in the 1848 Revolution included Anselme Bellegarrigue, Ernest Coeurderoy, Joseph Déjacque\*[68] and Pierre Joseph Proudhon.\*[71]\*[72]

### 7.2.2 First International and the Paris Commune

Main articles: *International Workingmen's Association* and *Paris Commune*

In Europe, harsh reaction followed the revolutions of 1848, during which ten countries had experienced brief or long-term social upheaval as groups carried out nationalist uprisings. After most of these attempts at systematic change ended in failure, conservative elements took advantage of the divided groups of socialists, anarchists, liberals, and nationalists, to prevent further revolt.\*[73] In Spain Ramón de la Sagra established the anarchist



*Collectivist anarchist Mikhail Bakunin opposed the Marxist aim of dictatorship of the proletariat in favour of universal rebellion, and allied himself with the federalists in the First International before his expulsion by the Marxists.\*[57]*

journal *El Porvenir* in La Coruña in 1845 which was inspired by Proudhon's ideas.\*[74] The Catalan politician Francesc Pi i Margall became the principal translator of Proudhon's works into Spanish\*[75] and later briefly became president of Spain in 1873 while being the leader of the Democratic Republican Federal Party. According to George Woodcock “These translations were to have a profound and lasting effect on the development of Spanish anarchism after 1870, but before that time Proudhonian ideas, as interpreted by Pi, already provided much of the inspiration for the federalist movement which sprang up in the early 1860's.”\*[76] According to the *Encyclopædia Britannica* “During the Spanish revolution of 1873, Pi y Margall attempted to establish a decentralised, or “cantonist,” political system on Proudhonian lines.”\*[74]

In 1864 the *International Workingmen's Association* (sometimes called the “First International”) united diverse revolutionary currents including French followers of Proudhon,\*[77] Blanquists, Philadelphes, English trade unionists, socialists and social democrats. Due to its links to active workers' movements, the International became a significant organisation. Karl Marx became a leading figure in the International and a member of its General Council. Proudhon's followers, the mutualists, opposed Marx's *state socialism*, advocating political abstentionism and small property holdings.\*[78]\*[79] Woodcock also reports that the American individualist anarchists Lysander Spooner and William B. Greene

had been members of the **First International**.<sup>[80]</sup> In 1868, following their unsuccessful participation in the **League of Peace and Freedom** (LPF), Russian revolutionary Mikhail Bakunin and his collectivist anarchist associates joined the First International (which had decided not to get involved with the LPF).<sup>[81]</sup> They allied themselves with the **federalist** socialist sections of the International,<sup>[82]</sup> who advocated the revolutionary overthrow of the state and the collectivisation of property.

At first, the collectivists worked with the Marxists to push the First International in a more revolutionary socialist direction. Subsequently, the International became polarised into two camps, with Marx and Bakunin as their respective figureheads.<sup>[83]</sup> Mikhail Bakunin characterised Marx's ideas as **centralist** and predicted that, if a Marxist party came to power, its leaders would simply take the place of the **ruling class** they had fought against.<sup>[84]</sup><sup>[85]</sup> Anarchist historian George Woodcock reports that "The annual Congress of the International had not taken place in 1870 owing to the outbreak of the Paris Commune, and in 1871 the General Council called only a special conference in London. One delegate was able to attend from Spain and none from Italy, while a technical excuse – that they had split away from the **Fédération Romande** – was used to avoid inviting Bakunin's Swiss supporters. Thus only a tiny minority of anarchists was present, and the General Council's resolutions passed almost unanimously. Most of them were clearly directed against Bakunin and his followers."<sup>[86]</sup> In 1872, the conflict climaxed with a final split between the two groups at the **Hague Congress**, where Bakunin and **James Guillaume** were expelled from the International and its headquarters were transferred to New York. In response, the federalist sections formed their own International at the **St. Imier Congress**, adopting a revolutionary anarchist programme.<sup>[87]</sup>

The **Paris Commune** was a government that briefly ruled Paris from 18 March (more formally, from 28 March) to 28 May 1871. The Commune was the result of an uprising in Paris after France was defeated in the Franco-Prussian War. Anarchists participated actively in the establishment of the Paris Commune. They included **Louise Michel**, the Reclus brothers, and **Eugene Varlin** (the latter murdered in the repression afterwards). As for the reforms initiated by the Commune, such as the re-opening of workplaces as co-operatives, anarchists can see their ideas of associated labour beginning to be realised ... Moreover, the Commune's ideas on federation obviously reflected the influence of Proudhon on French radical ideas. Indeed, the Commune's vision of a communal France based on a federation of delegates bound by imperative mandates issued by their electors and subject to recall at any moment echoes Bakunin's and Proudhon's ideas (Proudhon, like Bakunin, had argued in favour of the "implementation of the binding mandate" in 1848 ... and for federation of communes). Thus both economically and politically the Paris Commune was heavily influ-

enced by anarchist ideas.<sup>[88]</sup> George Woodcock states:

a notable contribution to the activities of the Commune and particularly to the organization of public services was made by members of various anarchist factions, including the mutualists Courbet, Longuet, and Vermorel, the libertarian collectivists Varlin, Malon, and Lefrangais, and the bakuninists Elie and **Elisée Reclus** and Louise Michel.<sup>[86]</sup>

### 7.2.3 Organised labour

Main articles: **Anarcho-syndicalism**, **International Workers' Association**, **Anarchism in Spain**, and **Spanish Revolution**

The anti-authoritarian sections of the First International were the precursors of the anarcho-syndicalists, seeking to "replace the privilege and authority of the State" with the "free and spontaneous organization of labour."<sup>[89]</sup> In 1886, the **Federation of Organized Trades and Labor Unions** (FOTLU) of the United States and Canada unanimously set 1 May 1886, as the date by which the **eight-hour work day** would become standard.<sup>[90]</sup>



A sympathetic engraving by Walter Crane of the executed "Anarchists of Chicago" after the Haymarket affair. The Haymarket affair is generally considered the most significant event for the origin of international May Day observances.



In response, unions across the United States prepared a **general strike** in support of the event.\*[90] On 3 May, in Chicago, a fight broke out when **strikebreakers** attempted to cross the picket line, and two workers died when police opened fire upon the crowd.\*[91] The next day, 4 May, anarchists staged a rally at Chicago's Haymarket Square.\*[92] A bomb was thrown by an unknown party near the conclusion of the rally, killing an officer.\*[93] In the ensuing panic, police opened fire on the crowd and each other.\*[94] Seven police officers and at least four workers were killed.\*[95] Eight anarchists directly and indirectly related to the organisers of the rally were arrested and charged with the murder of the deceased officer. The men became international political celebrities among the labour movement. Four of the men were executed and a fifth committed suicide prior to his own execution. The incident became known as the Haymarket affair, and was a setback for the labour movement and the struggle for the eight-hour day. In 1890 a second attempt, this time international in scope, to organise for the eight-hour day was made. The event also had the secondary purpose of memorialising workers killed as a result of the Haymarket affair.\*[96] Although it had initially been conceived as a once-off event, by the following year the celebration of **International Workers' Day** on May Day had become firmly established as an international worker's holiday.\*[90]

In 1907, the **International Anarchist Congress of Amsterdam** gathered delegates from 14 different countries, among which important figures of the anarchist movement, including **Errico Malatesta**, **Pierre Monatte**, **Luigi Fabbri**, **Benoît Broutchoux**, **Emma Goldman**, **Rudolf Rocker**, and **Christiaan Cornelissen**. Various themes were treated during the Congress, in particular concerning the organisation of the anarchist movement, popular education issues, the general strike or antimilitarism. A central debate concerned the relation between anarchism and **syndicalism** (or **trade unionism**). Malatesta and Monatte were in particular disagreement themselves on this issue, as the latter thought that syndicalism was revolutionary and would create the conditions of a social revolution, while Malatesta did not consider syndicalism by itself sufficient.\*[97] He thought that the trade-union movement was **reformist** and even **conservative**, citing as essentially bourgeois and anti-worker the phenomenon of professional union officials. Malatesta warned that the syndicalists aims were in perpetuating syndicalism itself, whereas anarchists must always have anarchy as their end and consequently refrain from committing to any particular method of achieving it.\*[98]

The **Spanish Workers Federation** in 1881 was the first major anarcho-syndicalist movement; anarchist trade union federations were of special importance in Spain. The most successful was the **Confederación Nacional del Trabajo** (National Confederation of Labour: CNT), founded in 1910. Before the 1940s, the CNT was the major force in Spanish working class politics, attracting

1.58 million members at one point and playing a major role in the **Spanish Civil War**.\*[99] The CNT was affiliated with the **International Workers Association**, a federation of anarcho-syndicalist trade unions founded in 1922, with delegates representing two million workers from 15 countries in Europe and Latin America. In Latin America in particular “The anarchists quickly became active in organising craft and industrial workers throughout South and Central America, and until the early 1920s most of the trade unions in **Mexico**, **Brazil**, Peru, Chile, and Argentina were anarcho-syndicalist in general outlook; the prestige of the Spanish C.N.T. as a revolutionary organisation was undoubtedly to a great extent responsible for this situation. The largest and most militant of these organisations was the **Federación Obrera Regional Argentina** ... it grew quickly to a membership of nearly a quarter of a million, which dwarfed the rival socialdemocratic unions.”\*[86]

#### 7.2.4 Propaganda of the deed and illegalism

Main articles: **Propaganda of the deed**, **Illegalism**, and **Expropriative anarchism**

Some anarchists, such as **Johann Most**, advocated



*Italian-American anarchist Luigi Galleani. His followers, known as Galleanists, carried out a series of bombings and assassination attempts from 1914 to 1932 in what they saw as attacks on 'tyrants' and 'enemies of the people'*

publicising violent acts of retaliation against counter-revolutionaries because “we preach not only action in and for itself, but also action as propaganda.”\*[100] Schol-

ars such as Beverly Gage contend that this was not advocacy of mass murder, but **targeted killings** of members of the ruling class at times when such actions might garner sympathy from the population, such as during heightened government repression and labor conflicts where workers were killed.\*[101] However, Most himself once boasted that “the existing system will be quickest and most radically overthrown by the annihilation of its exponents. Therefore, massacres of the enemies of the people must be set in motion.”\*[102] Most is best known for a pamphlet published in 1885: *The Science of Revolutionary Warfare*, a how-to manual on the subject of making explosives, based on knowledge he acquired while working at an explosives plant in New Jersey.\*[103]

By the 1880s, people inside and outside the anarchist movement began to use the slogan, “propaganda of the deed” to refer to individual bombings, **regicides**, and **tyrannicides**. From 1905 onwards, the Russian counterparts of these anti-syndicalist anarchist-communists become partisans of economic terrorism and illegal ‘**expropriations**’.\*[104] **Illegalism** as a practice emerged and within it “The acts of the anarchist bombers and assassins (“**propaganda by the deed**”) and the anarchist burglars (“**individual reappropriation**”) expressed their desperation and their personal, violent rejection of an intolerable society. Moreover, they were clearly meant to be *exemplary* invitations to revolt.”\*[105] France’s **Bonnot Gang** was the most famous group to embrace illegalism.

However, as soon as 1887, important figures in the anarchist movement distanced themselves from such individual acts. Peter Kropotkin thus wrote that year in *Le Révolté* that “a structure based on centuries of history cannot be destroyed with a few kilos of dynamite”.\*[106] A variety of anarchists advocated the abandonment of these sorts of tactics in favour of collective revolutionary action, for example through the trade union movement. The anarcho-syndicalist, **Fernand Pelloutier**, argued in 1895 for renewed anarchist involvement in the labour movement on the basis that anarchism could do very well without “the individual dynamiter.”\*[107]

**State repression** (including the infamous 1894 French *lois scélérates*) of the anarchist and labour movements following the few successful bombings and assassinations may have contributed to the abandonment of these kinds of tactics, although reciprocally state repression, in the first place, may have played a role in these isolated acts. The dismemberment of the French **socialist movement**, into many groups and, following the suppression of the 1871 Paris Commune, the execution and exile of many **communards** to penal colonies, favoured individualist political expression and acts.\*[108]

Numerous heads of state were assassinated between 1881 and 1914 by members of the anarchist movement, including Tsar **Alexander II of Russia**, President **Sadi Carnot** of France, Empress **Elisabeth of Austria**, King **Umberto I of Italy**, President **William McKinley** of the United

States, King **Carlos I of Portugal** and King **George I of Greece**. McKinley’s assassin **Leon Czolgosz** claimed to have been influenced by anarchist and **feminist** **Emma Goldman**.\*[109]

Propaganda of the deed was abandoned by the vast majority of the anarchist movement after World War I (1914–1918) and the **1917 October Revolution**.

## 7.2.5 Russian Revolution and other uprisings of the 1910s

Main articles: **Anarchism in Russia**, **Russian Revolution (1917)**, **Revolutionary Insurrectionary Army of Ukraine**, and **Revolutions of 1917–23**

Anarchists participated alongside the **Bolsheviks** in both



*Nestor Makhno with members of the anarchist Revolutionary Insurrectionary Army of Ukraine*

**February** and **October revolutions**, and were initially enthusiastic about the **Bolshevik** revolution.\*[110] However, following a political falling out with the **Bolsheviks** by the anarchists and other left-wing opposition, the conflict culminated in the 1921 **Kronstadt rebellion**, which the new government repressed. Anarchists in central Russia were either imprisoned, driven underground or joined the victorious **Bolsheviks**; the anarchists from Petrograd and Moscow fled to **Ukraine**.\*[111] There, in the **Free Territory**, they fought in the **civil war** against the **Whites** (a grouping of monarchists and other opponents of the October Revolution) and then the **Bolsheviks** as part of the **Revolutionary Insurrectionary Army of Ukraine** led by **Nestor Makhno**, who established an anarchist society in the region for a number of months.

Expelled American anarchists **Emma Goldman** and **Alexander Berkman** were among those agitating in response to **Bolshevik** policy and the suppression of the **Kronstadt uprising**, before they left Russia. Both wrote accounts of their experiences in Russia, criticising the amount of control the **Bolsheviks** exercised. For them, **Bakunin’s** predictions about the consequences of **Marxist** rule that the rulers of the new “socialist” **Marxist** state would become a new elite had proved all too true.\*[84]\*[112]



The victory of the Bolsheviks in the October Revolution and the resulting Russian Civil War did serious damage to anarchist movements internationally. Many workers and activists saw Bolshevik success as setting an example; Communist parties grew at the expense of anarchism and other socialist movements. In France and the United States, for example, members of the major syndicalist movements of the CGT and IWW left the organisations and joined the Communist International.\*[113]

The revolutionary wave of 1917–23 saw the active participation of anarchists in varying degrees of protagonism. In the German uprising known as the German Revolution of 1918–1919 which established the Bavarian Soviet Republic the anarchists Gustav Landauer, Silvio Gesell and Erich Mühsam had important leadership positions within the revolutionary councilist structures.\*[114]\*[115] In the Italian events known as the *biennio rosso*\*[116] the anarcho-syndicalist trade union *Unione Sindacale Italiana* “grew to 800,000 members and the influence of the Italian Anarchist Union (20,000 members plus *Umanita Nova*, its daily paper) grew accordingly ... Anarchists were the first to suggest occupying workplaces.\*[117] In the Mexican Revolution the Mexican Liberal Party was established and during the early 1910s it led a series of military offensives leading to the conquest and occupation of certain towns and districts in Baja California with the leadership of anarcho-communist Ricardo Flores Magón.\*[118]

In Paris, the Dielo Truda group of Russian anarchist exiles, which included Nestor Makhno, concluded that anarchists needed to develop new forms of organisation in response to the structures of Bolshevism. Their 1926 manifesto, called the *Organisational Platform of the General Union of Anarchists (Draft)*,\*[119] was supported. Platformist groups active today include the Workers Solidarity Movement in Ireland and the North Eastern Federation of Anarchist Communists of North America. Synthesis anarchism emerged as an organisational alternative to platformism that tries to join anarchists of different tendencies under the principles of anarchism without adjectives.\*[120] In the 1920s this form found as its main proponents Volin and Sebastien Faure.\*[120] It is the main principle behind the anarchist federations grouped around the contemporary global International of Anarchist Federations.\*[120]

## 7.2.6 Conflicts with European fascist regimes

Main article: Anti-fascism

See also: Anarchism in France, Anarchism in Italy, Anarchism in Spain, and Anarchism in Germany

In the 1920s and 1930s, the rise of fascism in Europe transformed anarchism's conflict with the state. Italy saw the first struggles between anarchists and fascists. Italian

anarchists played a key role in the anti-fascist organisation *Arditi del Popolo*, which was strongest in areas with anarchist traditions, and achieved some success in their activism, such as repelling Blackshirts in the anarchist stronghold of Parma in August 1922.\*[121] The veteran Italian anarchist, Luigi Fabbri, was one of the first critical theorists of fascism, describing it as “the preventive counter-revolution.”\*[39] In France, where the far right leagues came close to insurrection in the February 1934 riots, anarchists divided over a united front policy.\*[122]

Anarchists in France\*[123] and Italy\*[124] were active in the Resistance during World War II. In Germany the anarchist Erich Mühsam was arrested on charges unknown in the early morning hours of 28 February 1933, within a few hours after the Reichstag fire in Berlin. Joseph Goebbels, the Nazi propaganda minister, labelled him as one of “those Jewish subversives.” Over the next seventeen months, he would be imprisoned in the concentration camps at Sonnenburg, Brandenburg and finally, Oranienburg. On 2 February 1934, Mühsam was transferred to the concentration camp at Oranienburg when finally on the night of 9 July 1934, Mühsam was tortured and murdered by the guards, his battered corpse found hanging in a latrine the next morning.\*[125]

## 7.2.7 Spanish Revolution

Main article: Spanish Revolution

In Spain, the national anarcho-syndicalist trade union Confederación Nacional del Trabajo initially refused to join a popular front electoral alliance, and abstention by CNT supporters led to a right wing election victory. But in 1936, the CNT changed its policy and anarchist votes helped bring the popular front back to power. Months later, conservative members of the military, with the support of minority extreme-right parties, responded with an attempted coup, causing the Spanish Civil War (1936–1939).\*[126] In response to the army rebellion, an anarchist-inspired movement of peasants and workers, supported by armed militias, took control of Barcelona and of large areas of rural Spain where they collectivised the land.\*[127]\*[128] But even before the fascist victory in 1939, the anarchists were losing ground in a bitter struggle with the Stalinists, who controlled much of the distribution of military aid to the Republican cause from the Soviet Union. According to Noam Chomsky, “the communists were mainly responsible for the destruction of the Spanish anarchists. Not just in Catalonia—the communist armies mainly destroyed the collectives elsewhere. The communists basically acted as the police force of the security system of the Republic and were very much opposed to the anarchists, partially because Stalin still hoped at that time to have some kind of pact with Western countries against Hitler. That, of course, failed and Stalin withdrew the support to the Republic. They even withdrew the Spanish gold reserves.”\*[129] The

events known as the Spanish Revolution was a workers' social revolution that began during the outbreak of the Spanish Civil War in 1936 and resulted in the widespread implementation of anarchist and more broadly **libertarian socialist** organisational principles throughout various portions of the country for two to three years, primarily **Catalonia**, **Aragon**, **Andalusia**, and parts of the **Levante**. Much of **Spain's economy** was put under worker control; in anarchist strongholds like Catalonia, the figure was as high as 75%, but lower in areas with heavy **Communist Party of Spain** influence, as the Soviet-allied party actively resisted attempts at **collectivisation** enactment. Factories were run through worker committees, **agrarian** areas became collectivised and run as **libertarian communes**. Anarchist historian **Sam Dolgoff** estimated that about eight million people participated directly or at least indirectly in the Spanish Revolution,<sup>[130]</sup> which he claimed “came closer to realising the ideal of the free stateless society on a vast scale than any other revolution in history.”<sup>[131]</sup> **Spanish Communist Party**-led troops suppressed the collectives and persecuted both **dissident Marxists** and anarchists.<sup>[132]</sup> The prominent Italian anarchist **Camillo Berneri**, who volunteered to fight against Franco was killed instead in Spain by gunmen associated with the Spanish Communist Party.<sup>[133]</sup><sup>[134]</sup><sup>[135]</sup> The city of Madrid was turned over to the francoist forces by the last non-francoist mayor of the city, the anarchist **Melchor Rodríguez García**.<sup>[136]</sup>

## 7.2.8 Post-war years

Anarchism sought to reorganise itself after the war and in this context the organisational debate between synthesis anarchism and platformism took importance once again especially in the **anarchist movements of Italy and France**. The **Mexican Anarchist Federation** was established in 1945 after the Anarchist Federation of the Centre united with the Anarchist Federation of the Federal District.<sup>[137]</sup> In the early 1940s, the Antifascist International Solidarity and the Federation of Anarchist Groups of Cuba merged into the large national organisation **Asociación Libertaria de Cuba** (Cuban Libertarian Association).<sup>[138]</sup> From 1944 to 1947, the **Bulgarian Anarchist Communist Federation** reemerged as part of a factory and workplace committee movement, but was repressed by the new Communist regime.<sup>[139]</sup> In 1945 in France the **Fédération Anarchiste** and the anarcho-syndicalist trade union **Confédération nationale du travail** was established in the next year while the also **synthesist Federazione Anarchica Italiana** was founded in Italy. Korean anarchists formed the League of Free Social Constructors in September 1945<sup>[139]</sup> and in 1946 the **Japanese Anarchist Federation** was founded.<sup>[140]</sup> An International Anarchist Congress with delegates from across Europe was held in Paris in May 1948.<sup>[139]</sup> After World War II, an appeal in the *Fraye Arbeter Shtime* detailing the plight of **German anarchists** and called for

Americans to support them. By February 1946, the sending of aid parcels to anarchists in Germany was a large-scale operation. The Federation of Libertarian Socialists was founded in Germany in 1947 and Rudolf Rocker wrote for its organ, *Die Freie Gesellschaft*, which survived until 1953.<sup>[141]</sup> In 1956 the **Uruguayan Anarchist Federation** was founded.<sup>[142]</sup> In 1955 the Anarcho-Communist Federation of Argentina renamed itself as the **Argentine Libertarian Federation**. The **Syndicalist Workers' Federation** was a syndicalist group in active in post-war Britain,<sup>[143]</sup> and one of **Solidarity Federation's** earliest predecessors. It was formed in 1950 by members of the dissolved Anarchist Federation of Britain.<sup>[143]</sup> Unlike the AFB, which was influenced by anarcho-syndicalist ideas but ultimately not syndicalist itself, the SWF decided to pursue a more definitely syndicalist, worker-centred strategy from the outset.<sup>[143]</sup>

Anarchism continued to influence important literary and intellectual personalities of the time, such as **Albert Camus**, **Herbert Read**, **Paul Goodman**, **Dwight Macdonald**, **Allen Ginsberg**, **George Woodcock**, **Leopold Kohr**,<sup>[144]</sup><sup>[145]</sup> **Julian Beck**, **John Cage**<sup>[146]</sup> and the French Surrealist group led by **André Breton**, which now openly embraced anarchism and collaborated in the **Fédération Anarchiste**.<sup>[147]</sup>

Anarcho-pacifism became influential in the Anti-nuclear movement and anti war movements of the time<sup>[148]</sup><sup>[149]</sup> as can be seen in the activism and writings of the English anarchist member of **Campaign for Nuclear Disarmament** **Alex Comfort** or the similar activism of the American catholic anarcho-pacifists **Ammon Hennacy** and **Dorothy Day**. Anarcho-pacifism became a “basis for a critique of militarism on both sides of the **Cold War**.”<sup>[150]</sup> The resurgence of anarchist ideas during this period is well documented in Robert Graham's *Anarchism: A Documentary History of Libertarian Ideas, Volume Two: The Emergence of the New Anarchism (1939–1977)*.<sup>[139]</sup>

## 7.2.9 Contemporary anarchism

Main article: **Contemporary anarchism**

A surge of popular interest in anarchism occurred in western nations during the 1960s and 1970s.<sup>[151]</sup> Anarchism was influential in the **Counterculture of the 1960s**<sup>[152]</sup><sup>[153]</sup><sup>[154]</sup> and anarchists actively participated in the late sixties students and workers revolts.<sup>[155]</sup> In 1968 in Carrara, Italy the **International of Anarchist Federations** was founded during an international anarchist conference held there in 1968 by the three existing European federations of France (the **Fédération Anarchiste**), the **Federazione Anarchica Italiana** of Italy and the **Iberian Anarchist Federation** as well as the **Bulgarian federation** in French exile.<sup>[156]</sup><sup>[157]</sup>

In the United Kingdom in the 1970s this was associated with the punk rock movement, as exemplified by bands



*The famous okupas squat near Parc Güell, overlooking Barcelona. Squatting was a prominent part of the emergence of renewed anarchist movement from the counterculture of the 1960s and 1970s. On the roof: “Occupy and Resist”*

such as Crass and the Sex Pistols.\*[158] The housing and employment crisis in most of Western Europe led to the formation of communes and squatter movements like that of Barcelona, Spain. In Denmark, squatters occupied a disused military base and declared the Freetown Christiania, an autonomous haven in central Copenhagen. Since the revival of anarchism in the mid-20th century,\*[159] a number of new movements and schools of thought emerged. Although feminist tendencies have always been a part of the anarchist movement in the form of anarcho-feminism, they returned with vigour during the second wave of feminism in the 1960s. Anarchist anthropologist David Graeber and anarchist historian Andrej Grubacic have posited a rupture between generations of anarchism, with those “who often still have not shaken the sectarian habits” of the 19th century contrasted with the younger activists who are “much more informed, among other elements, by indigenous, feminist, ecological and cultural-critical ideas”, and who by the turn of the 21st century formed “by far the majority” of anarchists.\*[160]

Around the turn of the 21st century, anarchism grew in popularity and influence as part of the anti-war, anti-capitalist, and anti-globalisation movements.\*[161] Anarchists became known for their involvement in protests against the meetings of the World Trade Organization (WTO), Group of Eight, and the World Economic Forum. Some anarchist factions at these protests engaged in rioting, property destruction, and violent confrontations with police. These actions were precipitated by ad hoc, leaderless, anonymous cadres known as *black blocs*; other organisational tactics pioneered in this time include security culture, affinity groups and the use of decentralised technologies such as the internet.\*[161] A significant event of this period was the confrontations at WTO conference in Seattle in 1999.\*[161] According to anarchist scholar Simon Critchley, “contemporary anarchism can be seen as a powerful critique of the pseudo-libertarianism of contemporary neo-liberalism ... One might say that contemporary anarchism is about respon-

sibility, whether sexual, ecological or socio-economic; it flows from an experience of conscience about the manifold ways in which the West ravages the rest; it is an ethical outrage at the yawning inequality, impoverishment and disenfranchisement that is so palpable locally and globally.”\*[162]

International anarchist federations in existence include the International of Anarchist Federations, the International Workers' Association, and International Libertarian Solidarity. The largest organised anarchist movement today is in Spain, in the form of the Confederación General del Trabajo (CGT) and the CNT. CGT membership was estimated at around 100,000 for 2003.\*[163] Other active syndicalist movements include in Sweden the Central Organisation of the Workers of Sweden and the Swedish Anarcho-syndicalist Youth Federation; the CNT-AIT in France; the Unione Sindicale Italiana in Italy; in the US Workers Solidarity Alliance and the UK Solidarity Federation and Anarchist Federation. The revolutionary industrial unionist Industrial Workers of the World, claiming 3,000 paying members, and the International Workers Association, an anarcho-syndicalist successor to the First International, also remain active.

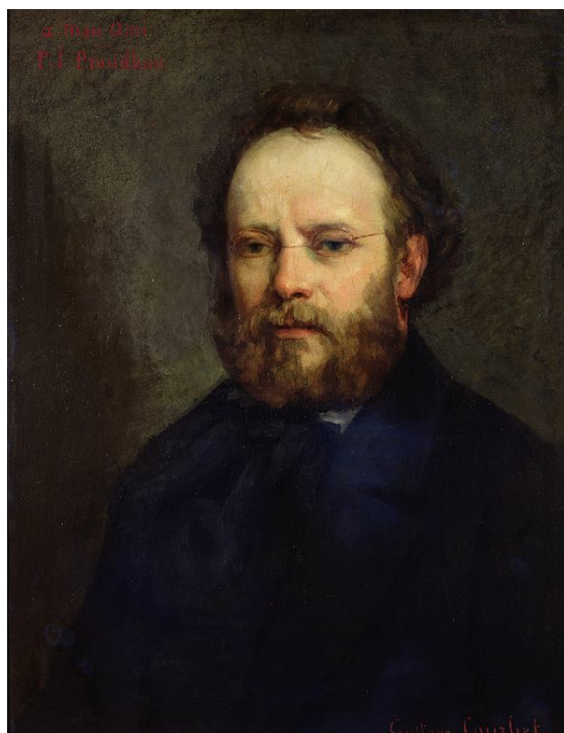
## 7.3 Anarchist schools of thought

Main article: *Anarchist schools of thought*

Anarchist schools of thought had been generally grouped in two main historical traditions, individualist anarchism and social anarchism, which have some different origins, values and evolution.\*[10]\*[17]\*[164]\*[165] The individualist wing of anarchism emphasises negative liberty, i.e. opposition to state or social control over the individual, while those in the social wing emphasise positive liberty to achieve one's potential and argue that humans have needs that society ought to fulfil, “recognising equality of entitlement”.\*[166] In a chronological and theoretical sense, there are classical – those created throughout the 19th century – and post-classical anarchist schools – those created since the mid-20th century and after.

Beyond the specific factions of anarchist thought is philosophical anarchism, which embodies the theoretical stance that the state lacks moral legitimacy without accepting the imperative of revolution to eliminate it. A component especially of individualist anarchism\*[167]\*[168] philosophical anarchism may accept the existence of a minimal state as unfortunate, and usually temporary, “necessary evil” but argue that citizens do not have a moral obligation to obey the state when its laws conflict with individual autonomy.\*[169] One reaction against sectarianism within the anarchist milieu was “anarchism without adjectives”, a call for toleration first adopted by Fernando Tarrida del Mármol in 1889 in response to the “bitter debates” of anarchist theory at the time.\*[170] In abandoning the hyphenated anar-





Portrait of philosopher Pierre-Joseph Proudhon (1809–1865) by Gustave Courbet. Proudhon was the primary proponent of anarchist mutualism, and influenced many later individualist anarchist and social anarchist thinkers.

chisms (i.e. collectivist-, communist-, mutualist- and individualist-anarchism), it sought to emphasise the anti-authoritarian beliefs common to all anarchist schools of thought.\*[171]

### 7.3.1 Classical anarchist schools of thought

#### Mutualism

Main article: [Mutualism \(economic theory\)](#)

Mutualism began in 18th-century English and French labour movements before taking an anarchist form associated with Pierre-Joseph Proudhon in France and others in the United States.\*[172] Proudhon proposed spontaneous order, whereby organisation emerges without central authority, a “positive anarchy” where order arises when everybody does “what he wishes and only what he wishes”\*[173] and where “business transactions alone produce the social order.”\*[174] Proudhon distinguished between ideal political possibilities and practical governance. For this reason, much in contrast to some of his theoretical statements concerning ultimate spontaneous self-governance, Proudhon was heavily involved in French parliamentary politics and allied himself not with anarchist but socialist factions of workers' movements and, in addition to advocating state-protected charters for

worker-owned cooperatives, promoted certain nationalisation schemes during his life of public service.

Mutualist anarchism is concerned with reciprocity, free association, voluntary contract, federation, and credit and currency reform. According to the American mutualist William Batchelder Greene, each worker in the mutualist system would receive “just and exact pay for his work; services equivalent in cost being exchangeable for services equivalent in cost, without profit or discount.”

\*[175] Mutualism has been retrospectively characterised as ideologically situated between individualist and collectivist forms of anarchism.\*[176] Proudhon first characterised his goal as a “third form of society, the synthesis of communism and property.”\*[177]

#### Individualist anarchism

Main article: [Individualist anarchism](#)

Individualist anarchism refers to several traditions of thought within the anarchist movement that emphasise the individual and their will over any kinds of external determinants such as groups, society, traditions, and ideological systems.\*[178]\*[179] Individualist anarchism is not a single philosophy but refers to a group of individualistic philosophies that sometimes are in conflict.

In 1793, William Godwin, who has often\*[60] been cited as the first anarchist, wrote *Political Justice*, which some consider the first expression of anarchism.\*[61]\*[63] Godwin, a philosophical anarchist, from a rationalist and utilitarian basis opposed revolutionary action and saw a minimal state as a present “necessary evil” that would become increasingly irrelevant and powerless by the gradual spread of knowledge.\*[61]\*[180] Godwin advocated individualism, proposing that all cooperation in labour be eliminated on the premise that this would be most conducive with the general good.\*[181]\*[182]

An influential form of individualist anarchism, called “egoism,”\*[183] or egoist anarchism, was expounded by one of the earliest and best-known proponents of individualist anarchism, the German Max Stirner.\*[70] Stirner's *The Ego and Its Own*, published in 1844, is a founding text of the philosophy.\*[70] According to Stirner, the only limitation on the rights of individuals is their power to obtain what they desire,\*[184] without regard for God, state, or morality.\*[185] To Stirner, rights were *spooks* in the mind, and he held that society does not exist but “the individuals are its reality”.\*[186] Stirner advocated self-assertion and foresaw unions of egoists, non-systematic associations continually renewed by all parties' support through an act of will,\*[187] which Stirner proposed as a form of organisation in place of the state.\*[188] Egoist anarchists argue that egoism will foster genuine and spontaneous union between individuals.\*[189] “Egoism” has inspired many interpretations of Stirner's philosophy. It was re-discovered and promoted by German philo-





19th-century philosopher Max Stirner, usually considered a prominent early individualist anarchist (sketch by Friedrich Engels).

sophical anarchist and homosexual activist John Henry Mackay.

Josiah Warren is widely regarded as the first American anarchist,\*[190] and the four-page weekly paper he edited during 1833, *The Peaceful Revolutionist*, was the first anarchist periodical published.\*[191] For American anarchist historian Eunice Minette Schuster “It is apparent ... that Proudhonian Anarchism was to be found in the United States at least as early as 1848 and that it was not conscious of its affinity to the Individualist Anarchism of Josiah Warren and Stephen Pearl Andrews ... William B. Greene presented this Proudhonian Mutualism in its purest and most systematic form.”\*[192] Henry David Thoreau (1817–1862) was an important early influence in individualist anarchist thought in the United States and Europe. Thoreau was an American author, poet, naturalist, tax resister, development critic, surveyor, historian, philosopher, and leading transcendentalist. He is best known for his books *Walden*, a reflection upon simple living in natural surroundings, and his essay, *Civil Disobedience*, an argument for individual resistance to civil government in moral opposition to an unjust state. Later Benjamin Tucker fused Stirner's egoism with the economics of Warren and Proudhon in his eclectic influential publication *Liberty*.

From these early influences individualist anarchism in different countries attracted a small but diverse following of bohemian artists and intellectuals,\*[193] free love and birth control advocates (see Anarchism and issues related to love and sex),\*[194]\*[195] individualist naturists nudists (see anarcho-naturism),\*[195]\*[196]\*[197]

freethought and anti-clerical activists\*[198]\*[199] as well as young anarchist outlaws in what became known as illegalism and individual reclamation\*[105]\*[200] (see European individualist anarchism and individualist anarchism in France). These authors and activists included Oscar Wilde, Emile Armand, Han Ryner, Henri Zisly, Renzo Novatore, Miguel Gimenez Igualada, Adolf Brand and Lev Chernyi among others.

### Social anarchism

Main article: [Social anarchism](#)

Social anarchism calls for a system with common ownership of means of production and democratic control of all organisations, without any government authority or coercion. It is the largest school of thought in anarchism.\*[201] Social anarchism rejects private property, seeing it as a source of social inequality (while retaining respect for personal property),\*[202] and emphasises co-operation and mutual aid.\*[203]

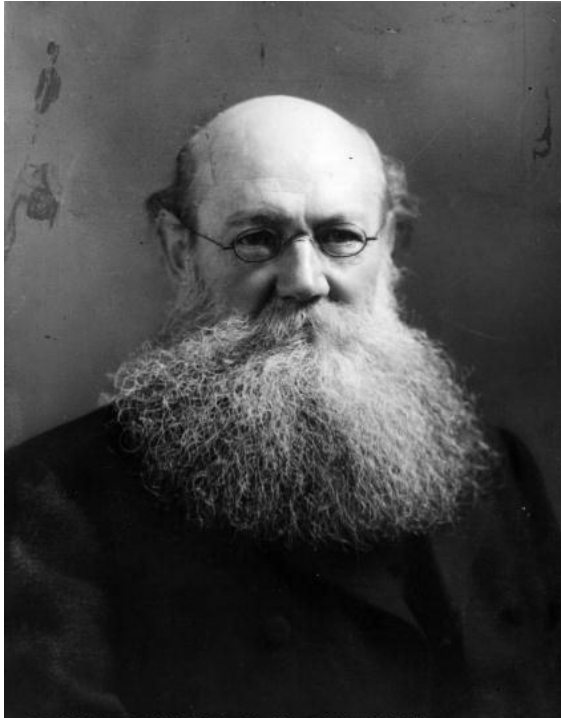
**Collectivist anarchism** Main article: [Collectivist anarchism](#)

Collectivist anarchism, also referred to as “revolutionary socialism” or a form of such,\*[204]\*[205] is a revolutionary form of anarchism, commonly associated with Mikhail Bakunin and Johann Most.\*[206]\*[207] Collectivist anarchists oppose all private ownership of the means of production, instead advocating that ownership be collectivised. This was to be achieved through violent revolution, first starting with a small cohesive group through acts of violence, or *propaganda by the deed*, which would inspire the workers as a whole to revolt and forcibly collectivise the means of production.\*[206]

However, collectivisation was not to be extended to the distribution of income, as workers would be paid according to time worked, rather than receiving goods being distributed “according to need” as in anarcho-communism. This position was criticised by anarchist communists as effectively “uphold[ing] the wages system”.\*[208] Collectivist anarchism arose contemporaneously with Marxism but opposed the Marxist dictatorship of the proletariat, despite the stated Marxist goal of a collectivist stateless society.\*[209] Anarchist, communist and collectivist ideas are not mutually exclusive; although the collectivist anarchists advocated compensation for labour, some held out the possibility of a post-revolutionary transition to a communist system of distribution according to need.\*[210]

**Anarcho-communism** Main article: [Anarcho-communism](#)

Anarchist communism (also known as anarcho-communism, libertarian communism\* [211]\* [212]\* [213]\* [214] and occasionally as free communism) is a theory of anarchism that advocates abolition of the state, markets, money, private property (while retaining respect for personal property),\* [202] and capitalism in favour of common ownership of the means of production,\* [215]\* [216] direct democracy and a horizontal network of voluntary associations and workers' councils with production and consumption based on the guiding principle: "from each according to his ability, to each according to his need".\* [217]\* [218]



*Russian theorist Peter Kropotkin (1842–1921), who was influential in the development of anarchist communism*

Some forms of anarchist communism such as insurrectionary anarchism are strongly influenced by egoism and radical individualism, believing anarcho-communism is the best social system for the realisation of individual freedom.\* [219]\* [220]\* [221]\* [222] Most anarcho-communists view anarcho-communism as a way of reconciling the opposition between the individual and society.\* [223]\* [224]\* [225]

Anarcho-communism developed out of radical socialist currents after the French revolution\* [226]\* [227] but was first formulated as such in the Italian section of the First International.\* [228] The theoretical work of Peter Kropotkin took importance later as it expanded and developed pro-organisationalist and insurrectionary anti-organisationalist sections.\* [229] To date, the best known examples of an anarchist communist society (i.e., established around the ideas as they exist today and achieving worldwide attention and knowledge in the historical canon), are the anarchist territories during the

Spanish Revolution\* [230] and the Free Territory during the Russian Revolution. Through the efforts and influence of the Spanish Anarchists during the Spanish Revolution within the Spanish Civil War, starting in 1936 anarchist communism existed in most of Aragon, parts of the Levante and Andalusia, as well as in the stronghold of Anarchist Catalonia before being crushed by the combined forces of the regime that won the war, Hitler, Mussolini, Spanish Communist Party repression (backed by the USSR) as well as economic and armaments blockades from the capitalist countries and the Spanish Republic itself.\* [231] During the Russian Revolution, anarchists such as Nestor Makhno worked to create and defend – through the Revolutionary Insurrectionary Army of Ukraine – anarchist communism in the Free Territory of the Ukraine from 1919 before being conquered by the Bolsheviks in 1921.

**Anarcho-syndicalism** Main article: **Anarcho-syndicalism**

Anarcho-syndicalism is a branch of anarchism that



*May day demonstration of Spanish anarcho-syndicalist trade union CNT in Bilbao, Basque Country in 2010*

focuses on the labour movement.\* [232] Anarcho-syndicalists view labour unions as a potential force for revolutionary social change, replacing capitalism and the state with a new society democratically self-managed by workers. The basic principles of anarcho-syndicalism are: Workers' solidarity, Direct action and Workers' self-management

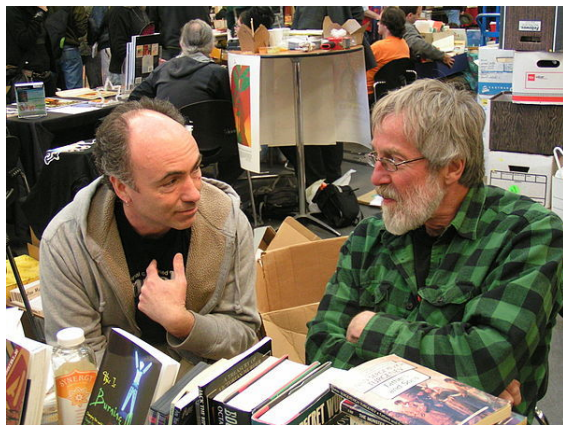
Anarcho-syndicalists believe that only direct action – that is, action concentrated on directly attaining a goal, as opposed to indirect action, such as electing a representative to a government position – will allow workers to liberate themselves.\* [233] Moreover, anarcho-syndicalists believe that workers' organisations (the organisations that struggle against the wage system, which, in anarcho-syndicalist theory, will eventually form the basis of a new society) should be self-managing. They should not have bosses or “business agents”; rather, the workers should be able to make all the decisions that affect them themselves. Rudolf Rocker was one of the most popular voices in the anarcho-syndicalist movement. He outlined a view of the

origins of the movement, what it sought, and why it was important to the future of labour in his 1938 pamphlet *Anarcho-Syndicalism*. The International Workers Association is an international anarcho-syndicalist federation of various labour unions from different countries. The Spanish Confederación Nacional del Trabajo played and still plays a major role in the Spanish labour movement. It was also an important force in the Spanish Civil War.

### Syncretic anarchism

The term syncretic anarchism was first coined by **Alberto Frigo** in relation to his reading of Jacques Ellul. Rephrasing the latter, Frigo observed that, if on one hand new technologies creates new form of power, on the other, new technologies are accompanied by the rise of what **Marcel Mauss** defines as magic. By developing the techniques to perform new magic and by adhering to it, marginal individuals come to create forms of syncretism which brings together the different dogmas and cultures a power structures uses to put humans against one another. The 19th century French postman **Ferdinand Cheval** for example, has intuitively experimented with the, at that time, new medium of cement, and created, after 33 years of adherence to certain rituals, a monument blending religions from around the world.

### 7.3.2 Post-classical schools of thought



*Lawrence Jarach (left) and John Zerzan (right), two prominent contemporary anarchist authors. Zerzan is known as prominent voice within anarcho-primitivism, while Jarach is a noted advocate of post-left anarchism.*

Anarchism continues to generate many philosophies and movements, at times eclectic, drawing upon various sources, and **syncretic**, combining disparate concepts to create new philosophical approaches.\*[234]

**Green anarchism** (or eco-anarchism)\*[235] is a school of thought within anarchism that emphasises environmental issues,\*[236] with an important precedent in anarcho-

naturism,\*[195]\*[237]\*[238] and whose main contemporary currents are anarcho-primitivism and **social ecology**.

Anarcha-feminism (also called anarchist feminism and anarcho-feminism) combines anarchism with feminism. It generally views **patriarchy** as a manifestation of involuntary coercive hierarchy that should be replaced by **decentralised** free association. Anarcha-feminists believe that the struggle against patriarchy is an essential part of **class struggle**, and the anarchist struggle against the state. In essence, the philosophy sees anarchist struggle as a necessary component of feminist struggle and vice versa. **L. Susan Brown** claims that “as anarchism is a political philosophy that opposes all relationships of power, it is inherently feminist”.\*[239] Anarcha-feminism began with the late 19th-century writings of early feminist anarchists such as Emma Goldman and **Voltairine de Cleyre**.

Anarcho-pacifism is a tendency that rejects violence in the struggle for social change (see **non-violence**).\*[86]\*[240] It developed “mostly in the Netherlands, Britain, and the United States, before and during the Second World War”.\*[86] Christian anarchism is a **movement in political theology** that combines anarchism and Christianity.\*[241] Its main proponents included **Leo Tolstoy**, Dorothy Day, Ammon Hennacy, and Jacques Ellul.

Platformism is a tendency within the wider anarchist movement based on the organisational theories in the tradition of Dielo Truda's *Organisational Platform of the General Union of Anarchists (Draft)*.\*[119] The document was based on the experiences of **Russian anarchists** in the 1917 October Revolution, which led eventually to the victory of the **Bolsheviks** over the anarchists and other groups. The *Platform* attempted to address and explain the anarchist movement's failures during the Russian Revolution.

Synthesis anarchism is a form of anarchism that tries to join anarchists of different tendencies under the principles of anarchism without adjectives.\*[242] In the 1920s, this form found as its main proponents the **anarcho-communists** **Voline** and **Sébastien Faure**.\*[120]\*[243] It is the main principle behind the anarchist federations grouped around the contemporary global **International of Anarchist Federations**.\*[242]

Post-left anarchism is a recent current in anarchist thought that promotes a critique of anarchism's relationship to traditional **Left-wing politics**. Some post-leftists seek to escape the confines of **ideology** in general also presenting a critique of organisations and **morality**.\*[244] Influenced by the work of **Max Stirner**\*[244] and by the **Marxist Situationist International**,\*[244] post-left anarchism is marked by a focus on social insurrection and a rejection of leftist social organisation.\*[245]

Insurrectionary anarchism is a revolutionary theory, practice, and tendency within the anarchist movement which emphasises **insurrection** within anarchist practice.\*[246]\*[247] It is critical of formal organisations



such as **labour unions** and federations that are based on a political programme and periodic congresses.\*[246] Instead, insurrectionary anarchists advocate informal organisation and small **affinity group** based organisation.\*[246]\*[247] Insurrectionary anarchists put value in attack, permanent **class conflict**, and a refusal to negotiate or compromise with class enemies.\*[246]\*[247]

Post-anarchism is a theoretical move towards a synthesis of classical anarchist theory and **poststructuralist** thought, drawing from diverse ideas including **post-modernism**, **autonomist marxism**, **post-left anarchy**, **Situationist International**, and **postcolonialism**.

**Left-wing market anarchism** strongly affirm the classical liberal ideas of self-ownership and free markets, while maintaining that, taken to their logical conclusions, these ideas support strongly anti-corporatist, anti-hierarchical, pro-labour positions and anti-capitalism in economics and anti-imperialism in foreign policy.\*[248]\*[249]\*[250]\*[251]

**Anarcho-capitalism** advocates the elimination of the state in favour of **individual sovereignty** in a free market.\*[252]\*[253] Anarcho-capitalism developed from radical anti-state libertarianism and individualist anarchism,\*[254]\*[255]\*[256]\*[257]\*[258]\*[259]\*[260] drawing from **Austrian School** economics, study of law and economics, and **public choice theory**.\*[261] There is a strong current within anarchism which believes that anarcho-capitalism cannot be considered a part of the anarchist movement, due to the fact that anarchism has historically been an **anti-capitalist** movement and for definitional reasons which see anarchism as **incompatible** with capitalist forms.\*[262]\*[263]\*[264]\*[265]\*[266]\*[267]

## 7.4 Internal issues and debates

See also: **Anarchism and violence**, **Anarchist schools of thought**, and **Issues in anarchism**

Anarchism is a philosophy that embodies many diverse



Which forms of violence (if any) are consistent with anarchist values is a controversial subject among anarchists.

attitudes, tendencies and schools of thought; as such, disagreement over questions of values, ideology and tactics is common. The compatibility of capitalism,\*[268] **nationalism**, and religion with anarchism is widely disputed. Similarly, anarchism enjoys complex relationships with ideologies such as **Marxism**, **communism**, **collectivism**, **syndicalism/trade unionism**, and capitalism. Anarchists may be motivated by **humanism**, divine authority, **enlightened self-interest**, **veganism** or any number of alternative ethical doctrines.

Phenomena such as **civilisation**, **technology** (e.g. within **anarcho-primitivism**), and the **democratic process** may be sharply criticised within some anarchist tendencies and simultaneously lauded in others.

On a tactical level, while **propaganda of the deed** was a tactic used by anarchists in the 19th century (e.g. the **Nihilist movement**), some contemporary anarchists espouse alternative direct action methods such as **nonviolence**, **counter-economics** and **anti-state cryptography** to bring about an anarchist society. About the scope of an anarchist society, some anarchists advocate a global one, while others do so by local ones.\*[269] The diversity in anarchism has led to widely different use of identical terms among different anarchist traditions, which has led to many **definitional concerns** in anarchist theory.

## 7.5 Topics of interest

Intersecting and overlapping between various schools of thought, certain topics of interest and internal disputes have proven perennial within anarchist theory.

### 7.5.1 Free love

Main articles: **Free love**, **Anarchism and issues related to love and sex**, **Anarcha-feminism**, and **Queer anarchism**

An important current within anarchism is **free love**.\*[270] Free love advocates sometimes traced their roots back to **Josiah Warren** and to experimental communities, viewed sexual freedom as a clear, direct expression of an individual's sovereignty. Free love particularly stressed **women's rights** since most sexual laws discriminated against women: for example, marriage laws and anti-birth control measures.\*[194] The most important American free love journal was *Lucifer the Lightbearer* (1883–1907) edited by **Moses Harman** and **Lois Waisbrooker**.\*[271] but also there existed **Ezra Heywood** and **Angela Heywood's** *The Word* (1872–1890, 1892–1893).\*[194] *Free Society* (1895–1897 as *The Firebrand*; 1897–1904 as *Free Society*) was a major anarchist newspaper in the United States at the end of the 19th and beginning of the 20th centuries.\*[272] The publication advocated free love and women's rights, and critiqued "**Comstockery**" – censorship of sexual information. Also **M. E. Lazarus** was an important





French individualist anarchist *Emile Armand* (1872–1962), who propounded the virtues of free love in the Parisian anarchist milieu of the early 20th century

American individualist anarchist who promoted free love.\*[194]

In New York City's *Greenwich Village*, bohemian feminists and socialists advocated self-realisation and pleasure for women (and also men) in the here and now. They encouraged playing with sexual roles and sexuality,\*[273] and the openly bisexual radical *Edna St. Vincent Millay* and the lesbian anarchist *Margaret Anderson*

were prominent among them. Discussion groups organised by the Villagers were frequented by *Emma Goldman*, among others. *Magnus Hirschfeld* noted in 1923 that Goldman “has campaigned boldly and steadfastly for individual rights, and especially for those deprived of their rights. Thus it came about that she was the first and only woman, indeed the first and only American, to take up the defence of homosexual love before the general public.”

\*[274] In fact, before Goldman, *heterosexual* anarchist *Robert Reitzel* (1849–1898) spoke positively of homosexuality from the beginning of the 1890s in his Detroit-based *German language* journal *Der arme Teufel* (English: The Poor Devil). In Argentina anarcha-feminist *Virginia Bolten* published the newspaper called *La Voz de la Mujer* (English: The Woman's Voice), which was published nine times in Rosario between 8 January 1896 and 1 January 1897, and was revived, briefly, in 1901.\*[275]

In Europe the main propagandist of free love within individualist anarchism was *Emile Armand*.\*[276] He proposed the concept of *la camaraderie amoureuse* to speak of free love as the possibility of voluntary sexual encounter between consenting adults. He was also a consistent proponent of *polyamory*.\*[276] In Germany the *stirnerists* *Adolf Brand* and *John Henry Mackay* were pioneering campaigners for the acceptance of male bisexuality and homosexuality. *Mujeres Libres* was an anarchist women's organisation in Spain that aimed to empower working class women. It was founded in 1936 by *Lucía Sánchez Saornil*, *Mercedes Comaposada* and *Amparo Poch y Gascón* and had approximately 30,000 members. The organisation was based on the idea of a “double struggle” for *women's liberation* and social revolution and argued that the two objectives were equally important and should be pursued in parallel. In order to gain mutual support, they created networks of women anarchists.\*[277] *Lucía Sánchez Saornil* was a main founder of the Spanish anarcha-feminist federation *Mujeres Libres* who was open about her *lesbianism*.\*[278] She was published in a variety of literary journals where working under a male pen name, she was able to explore lesbian themes\* [279] at a time when homosexuality was criminalised and subject to censorship and punishment.

More recently, the British *anarcho-pacifist* *Alex Comfort* gained notoriety during the *sexual revolution* for writing the bestseller sex manual *The Joy of Sex*. The issue of free love has a dedicated treatment in the work of French *anarcho-hedonist* philosopher *Michel Onfray* in such works as *Théorie du corps amoureux : pour une érotique solaire* (2000) and *L'invention du plaisir : fragments cyréaniques* (2002).

## 7.5.2 Libertarian education and freethought

See also: *Anarchism and education* and *Freethought*  
For English anarchist *William Godwin* education was



*Francesc Ferrer i Guàrdia, Catalan anarchist pedagogue and free-thinker*

“the main means by which change would be achieved.”  
 \* [280] Godwin saw that the main goal of education should be the promotion of happiness. \* [280] For Godwin education had to have “A respect for the child's autonomy which precluded any form of coercion,” “A pedagogy that respected this and sought to build on the child's own motivation and initiatives,” and “A concern about the child's capacity to resist an ideology transmitted through the school.” \* [280] In his *Political Justice* he criticises state sponsored schooling “on account of its obvious alliance with national government” \* [281] Early American anarchist Josiah Warren advanced alternative education experiences in the libertarian communities he established. \* [282] Max Stirner wrote in 1842 a long essay on education called *The False Principle of our Education*. In it Stirner names his educational principle “personalist,” explaining that self-understanding consists in hourly self-creation. Education for him is to create “free men, sovereign characters,” by which he means “eternal characters ... who are therefore eternal because they form themselves each moment” \* [283]

In the United States “freethought was a basically anti-christian, anti-clerical movement, whose purpose was to make the individual politically and spiritually free to decide for himself on religious matters. A number of con-

tributors to *Liberty* (anarchist publication) were prominent figures in both freethought and anarchism. The individualist anarchist George MacDonald was a co-editor of *Freethought* and, for a time, *The Truth Seeker*. E.C. Walker was co-editor of the excellent free-thought / free love journal *Lucifer, the Light-Bearer*. \* [198] “Many of the anarchists were ardent freethinkers; reprints from freethought papers such as *Lucifer, the Light-Bearer*, *Freethought* and *The Truth Seeker* appeared in *Liberty*... The church was viewed as a common ally of the state and as a repressive force in and of itself” \* [198]

In 1901, Catalan anarchist and free-thinker Francesc Ferrer i Guàrdia established “modern” or *progressive schools* in Barcelona in defiance of an educational system controlled by the Catholic Church. \* [284] The schools' stated goal was to “educate the working class in a rational, secular and non-coercive setting” . Fiercely anti-clerical, Ferrer believed in “freedom in education” , education free from the authority of church and state. \* [285] Murray Bookchin wrote: “This period [1890s] was the heyday of libertarian schools and pedagogical projects in all areas of the country where Anarchists exercised some degree of influence. Perhaps the best-known effort in this field was Francisco Ferrer's Modern School (Escuela Moderna), a project which exercised a considerable influence on Catalan education and on experimental techniques of teaching generally.” \* [286] La Escuela Moderna, and Ferrer's ideas generally, formed the inspiration for a series of *Modern Schools* in the United States, \* [284] Cuba, South America and London. The first of these was started in New York City in 1911. It also inspired the Italian newspaper *Università popolare*, founded in 1901. Russian christian anarchist Leo Tolstoy established a school for peasant children on his estate. \* [287] Tolstoy's educational experiments were short-lived due to harassment by the Tsarist secret police. \* [288] Tolstoy established a conceptual difference between education and culture. \* [287] He thought that “Education is the tendency of one man to make another just like himself ... Education is culture under restraint, culture is free. [Education is] when the teaching is forced upon the pupil, and when then instruction is exclusive, that is when only those subjects are taught which the educator regards as necessary” \* [287] For him “without compulsion, education was transformed into culture” \* [287]

A more recent libertarian tradition on education is that of *unschooling* and the *free school* in which child-led activity replaces pedagogic approaches. Experiments in Germany led to A. S. Neill founding what became *Summerhill School* in 1921. \* [289] Summerhill is often cited as an example of anarchism in practice. \* [290] \* [291] However, although Summerhill and other free schools are radically libertarian, they differ in principle from those of Ferrer by not advocating an overtly political class struggle-approach. \* [292] In addition to organising schools according to libertarian principles, anarchists have also questioned the concept of

schooling per se. The term **deschooling** was popularised by **Ivan Illich**, who argued that the school as an institution is dysfunctional for self-determined learning and serves the creation of a consumer society instead.\*[293]

## 7.6 Criticisms

Main article: Criticisms of anarchism

Criticisms of anarchism include moral criticisms and pragmatic criticisms. Anarchism is often evaluated as unfeasible or **utopian** by its critics.

## 7.7 See also

- Anarchism by country

## 7.8 References

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- [2] "In a society developed on these lines, the voluntary associations which already now begin to cover all the fields of human activity would take a still greater extension so as to substitute themselves for the state in all its functions." Peter Kropotkin. "Anarchism" from the Encyclopædia Britannica
- [3] "Anarchism." The Shorter Routledge Encyclopedia of Philosophy. 2005. p. 14 "Anarchism is the view that a society without the state, or government, is both possible and desirable."
- [4] Sheehan, Sean. Anarchism, London: Reaktion Books Ltd., 2004. p. 85
- [5] "as many anarchists have stressed, it is not government as such that they find objectionable, but the hierarchical forms of government associated with the nation state." Judith Suissa. *Anarchism and Education: a Philosophical Perspective*. Routledge. New York. 2006. p. 7
- [6] "IAF principles". International of Anarchist Federations. Archived from the original on 5 January 2012. The IAF – IFA fights for : the abolition of all forms of authority whether economical, political, social, religious, cultural or sexual.
- [7] "That is why Anarchy, when it works to destroy authority in all its aspects, when it demands the abrogation of laws and the abolition of the mechanism that serves to impose them, when it refuses all hierarchical organization and preaches free agreement —at the same time strives to maintain and enlarge the precious kernel of social customs without which no human or animal society can exist." Peter Kropotkin. *Anarchism: its philosophy and ideal*
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- [11] "Anarchists do reject the state, as we will see. But to claim that this central aspect of anarchism is definitive is to sell anarchism short." *Anarchism and Authority: A Philosophical Introduction to Classical Anarchism* by Paul McLaughlin. AshGate. 2007. p. 28
- [12] Brooks, Frank H. (1994). *The Individualist Anarchists: An Anthology of Liberty (1881–1908)*. Transaction Publishers. p. xi. ISBN 1-56000-132-1. Usually considered to be an extreme left-wing ideology, anarchism has always included a significant strain of radical individualism, from the hyper-rationalism of Godwin, to the egoism of Stirner, to the libertarians and anarcho-capitalists of today
- [13] Joseph Kahn (2000). "Anarchism, the Creed That Won't Stay Dead; The Spread of World Capitalism Resurrects a Long-Dormant Movement" . *The New York Times* (5 August). Colin Moynehan (2007). "Book Fair Unites Anarchists. In Spirit, Anyway" . *New York Times* (16 April).
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- [41] "Doing nothing [wu wei] is the famous Daoist concept for natural action, action in accord with Dao, action in which we freely follow our own way and allow other beings to do likewise. Zhuangzi, the great anarchic Daoist sage, compared it to "riding on the wind." Max Cafard. "Zen Anarchy"
- [42] "Zhuangzi helps us discover an anarchistic epistemology and sensibility. He describes a state in which "you are open to everything you see and hear, and allow this to act through you." [45] Part of wuwei, doing without doing, is "knowing without knowing," knowing as being open to the things known, rather than conquering and possessing the objects of knowledge. This means not imposing our



- prejudices (whether our own personal ones, our culture's, or those built into the human mind) on the Ten Thousand Things." Max Cafard. *The Surre(gion)alist Manifesto and Other Writings*
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- [51] Christoyannopoulos, Alexandre (2010). *Christian Anarchism: A Political Commentary on the Gospel*. Exeter: Imprint Academic. p. 254. The state as idolatry
- [52] Several historians of anarchism have gone so far as to classify La Botie's treatise itself as anarchist, which is incorrect since La Botie never extended his analysis from tyrannical government to government per se. But while La Botie cannot be considered an anarchist, his sweeping strictures on tyranny and the universality of his political philosophy lend themselves easily to such an expansion. *Introduction to The Politics of Obedience: The Discourse of Voluntary Servitude* by Murray Rothbard. Ludwig Von Mises Institute. p. 18
- [53] "Quite rightly, La Boétie recognizes the potential for domination in any democracy: the democratic leader, elected by the people, becomes intoxicated with his own power and teeters increasingly towards tyranny. Indeed, we can see modern democracy itself as an instance of voluntary servitude on a mass scale. It is not so much that we participate in an illusion whereby we are deceived by elites into thinking we have a genuine say in decision-making. It is rather that democracy itself has encouraged a mass contentment with powerlessness and a general love of submission." "Voluntary Servitude Reconsidered: Radical Politics and the Problem of Self-Domination" Saul Newman
- [54] "Anarchists have regarded the secular revolt of the Diggers, or True Levellers, in seventeenth-century England led by Gerrard Winstanley as a source of pride. Winstanley, deeming that property is corrupting, opposed clericalism, political power and privilege. It is economic inequality, he believed, that produces crime and misery. He championed a primitive communalism based on the pure teachings of God as comprehended through reason." Kenneth C. Wenzel. "Godwin's Place in the Anarchist Tradition —a Bicentennial Tribute"
- [55] "It was in these conditions of class struggle that, among a whole cluster of radical groups such as the Fifth Monarchy Men, the Levellers and the Ranters, there emerged perhaps the first real proto-anarchists, the Diggers, who like the classical 19th-century anarchists identified political and economic power and who believed that a social, rather than political revolution was necessary for the establishment of justice. Gerrard Winstanley, the Diggers' leader, made an identification with the word of God and the principle of reason, an equivalent philosophy to that found in Tolstoy's *The Kingdom of God is Within You*." Marlow. "Anarchism and Christianity"
- [56] "Although Proudhon was the first writer to call himself an anarchist, at least two predecessors outlined systems that contain all the basic elements of anarchism. The first was Gerrard Winstanley (1609 – c. 1660), a linen draper who led the small movement of the Diggers during the Commonwealth. Winstanley and his followers protested in the name of a radical Christianity against the economic distress that followed the Civil War and against the inequality that the grandees of the New Model Army seemed intent on preserving. In 1649–1650 the Diggers squatted on stretches of common land in southern England and attempted to set up communities based on work on the land and the sharing of goods." George Woodcock *Anarchism* The Encyclopedia of Philosophy
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- [147] "It was in the black mirror of anarchism that surrealism first recognised itself," wrote André Breton in "The Black Mirror of Anarchism," Selection 23 in Robert Graham, ed., *Anarchism: A Documentary History of Libertarian Ideas, Volume Two: The Emergence of the New Anarchism (1939–1977)*. Breton had returned to France in 1947 and in April of that year Andre Julien welcomed his return in the pages of *Le Libertaire* the weekly paper of the Federation Anarchiste "1919–1950: The politics of Surrealism" by Nick Heath on libcom.org
- [148] "In the forties and fifties, anarchism, in fact if not in name, began to reappear, often in alliance with pacifism, as the basis for a critique of militarism on both sides of the Cold War. The anarchist/pacifist wing of the peace movement was small in comparison with the wing of the movement that emphasized electoral work, but made an important contribution to the movement as a whole. Where the more conventional wing of the peace movement rejected militarism and war under all but the most dire circumstances, the anarchist/pacifist wing rejected these on principle." "Anarchism and the Anti-Globalization Movement" by Barbara Epstein
- [149] "In the 1950s and 1960s anarcho-pacifism began to gel, tough-minded anarchists adding to the mixture their critique of the state, and tender-minded pacifists their critique of violence. Its first practical manifestation was at the level of method: nonviolent direct action, principled and pragmatic, was used widely in both the Civil Rights movement in the US and the campaign against nuclear weapons in Britain and elsewhere." Geoffrey Ostergaard. *Resisting the Nation State. The pacifist and anarchist tradition*
- [150] "Anarchism and the Anti-Globalization Movement". *Monthly Review*. Retrieved 2006-06-22.
- [151] Thomas 1985, p. 4
- [152] "Islands of Anarchy: Simian, Cienfuegos, Refract and their support network". *katesharpleylibrary.net*. Archived from the original on 2011-06-04. Retrieved 2010-12-22.
- [153] Farrell provides a detailed history of the Catholic Workers and their founders Dorothy Day and Peter Maurin. He explains that their pacifism, anarchism, and commitment to the downtrodden were one of the important models and inspirations for the 1960s. As Farrell puts it, "Catholic Workers identified the issues of the sixties before the Sixties began, and they offered models of protest long before the protest decade." "The Spirit of the Sixties: The Making of Postwar Radicalism" by James J. Farrell
- [154] "While not always formally recognized, much of the protest of the sixties was anarchist. Within the nascent women's movement, anarchist principles became so widespread that a political science professor denounced what she saw as "The Tyranny of Structurelessness." Several groups have called themselves "Amazon Anarchists." After the *Stonewall Rebellion*, the New York Gay Liberation Front based their organization in part on a reading of Murray Bookchin's anarchist writings." "Anarchism" by Charley Shively in *Encyclopedia of Homosexuality*. p. 52
- [155] "Within the movements of the sixties there was much more receptivity to anarchism-in-fact than had existed in the movements of the thirties ... But the movements of the sixties were driven by concerns that were more compatible with an expressive style of politics, with hostility to authority in general and state power in particular ... By the late sixties, political protest was intertwined with cultural radicalism based on a critique of all authority and all hierarchies of power. Anarchism circulated within the movement along with other radical ideologies. The influence of anarchism was strongest among radical feminists, in the commune movement, and probably in the Weather Underground and elsewhere in the violent fringe of the anti-war movement." "Anarchism and the Anti-Globalization Movement" by Barbara Epstein
- [156] London Federation of Anarchists involvement in Carrara conference, 1968 International Institute of Social History. Retrieved 19 January 2010
- [157] Short history of the IAF-IFA A-infos news project. Retrieved 19 January 2010
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- [170] Avrich, Paul. *Anarchist Voices: An Oral History of Anarchism in America*. Princeton University Press, 1996, p. 6.
- [171] Esenwein, George Richard "Anarchist Ideology and the Working Class Movement in Spain, 1868–1898" [p. 135].
- [172] "A member of a community," *The Mutualist*; this 1826 series criticised Robert Owen's proposals, and has been attributed to a dissident Owenite, possibly from the Friendly Association for Mutual Interests of Valley Forge; Shawn Wilburn, 2006, "More from the 1826 "Mutualist"?".
- [173] Proudhon, *Solution to the Social Problem*, ed. H. Cohen (New York: Vanguard Press, 1927), p. 45.
- [174] Proudhon, Pierre-Joseph (1979). *The Principle of Federation*. Toronto: University of Toronto Press. ISBN 0-8020-5458-7. The notion of *anarchy* in politics is just as rational and positive as any other. It means that once industrial functions have taken over from political functions, then business transactions alone produce the social order.
- [175] "Communism versus Mutualism" , *Socialistic, Communistic, Mutualistic and Financial Fragments*. (Boston: Lee & Shepard, 1875) William Batchelder Greene: "Under the mutual system, each individual will receive the just and exact pay for his work; services equivalent in cost being exchangeable for services equivalent in cost, without profit or discount; and so much as the individual laborer will then get over and above what he has earned will come to him as his share in the general prosperity of the community of which he is an individual member."
- [176] Avrich, Paul. *Anarchist Voices: An Oral History of Anarchism in America*, Princeton University Press 1996 ISBN 0-691-04494-5, p. 6  
*Blackwell Encyclopaedia of Political Thought*, Blackwell Publishing 1991 ISBN 0-631-17944-5, p. 11.
- [177] Pierre-Joseph Proudhon. *What Is Property?* Princeton, MA: Benjamin R. Tucker, 1876. p. 281.
- [178] "What do I mean by individualism? I mean by individualism the moral doctrine which, relying on no dogma, no tradition, no external determination, appeals only to the individual conscience." *Mini-Manual of Individualism* by Han Ryner
- [179] "I do not admit anything except the existence of the individual, as a condition of his sovereignty. To say that the sovereignty of the individual is conditioned by Liberty is simply another way of saying that it is conditioned by itself." "Anarchism and the State" in *Individual Liberty*
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- [194] "The Free Love Movement and Radical Individualism, By Wendy McElroy" . *ncc-1776.org*. Retrieved 2009-11-29.

- [195] “Proliferarán así diversos grupos que practicarán el excursionismo, el naturismo, el nudismo, la emancipación sexual o el esperantismo, alrededor de asociaciones informales vinculadas de una manera o de otra al anarquismo. Precisamente las limitaciones a las asociaciones obreras impuestas desde la legislación especial de la Dictadura potenciarán indirectamente esta especie de asociacionismo informal en que confluirá el movimiento anarquista con esta heterogeneidad de prácticas y tendencias. Uno de los grupos más destacados, que será el impulsor de la revista individualista *Ética* será el Ateneo Naturista Ecléctico, con sede en Barcelona, con sus diferentes secciones la más destacada de las cuales será el grupo excursionista Sol y Vida.” “La insumisión voluntaria: El anarquismo individualista español durante la Dictadura y la Segunda República (1923–1938)” by Xavier Díez
- [196] “Los anarco-individualistas, G.I.A ... Una escisión de la FAI producida en el IX Congreso (Carrara, 1965) se produjo cuando un sector de anarquistas de tendencia humanista rechazan la interpretación que ellos juzgan disciplinaria del *pacto asociativo* clásico, y crean los GIA (Gruppi di Iniziativa Anarchica). Esta pequeña federación de grupos, hoy nutrida sobre todo de veteranos anarco-individualistas de orientación pacifista, naturista, etcétera defiende la autonomía personal y rechaza a rajatabla toda forma de intervención en los procesos del sistema, como sería por ejemplo el sindicalismo. Su portavoz es L'Internazionale con sede en Ancona. La escisión de los GIA prefiguraba, en sentido contrario, el gran debate que pronto había de comenzar en el seno del movimiento” “El movimiento libertario en Italia” by *Bicicleta*. *REVISTA DE COMUNICACIONES LIBERTARIAS* Year 1 No. Noviembre, 1 1977 Archived April 25, 2012, at the Wayback Machine.
- [197] “Les anarchistes individualistes du début du siècle l'avaient bien compris, et intégraient le naturisme dans leurs préoccupations. Il est vraiment dommage que ce discours se soit peu à peu effacé, d'autant plus que nous assistons, en ce moment, à un retour en force du puritanisme (conservateur par essence).” “Anarchisme et naturisme, aujourd'hui.” by Cathy Ytak Archived June 9, 2007, at the Wayback Machine.
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- [199] individualista.pdf Xavier Díez. *El anarquismo individualista en España (1923–1939)* Virus Editorial. 2007. p. 143
- [200] Parry, Richard. *The Bonnot Gang*. Rebel Press, 1987. p. 15
- [201] “This does not mean that the majority thread within the anarchist movement is uncritical of individualist anarchism. Far from it! Social anarchists have argued that this influence of non-anarchist ideas means that while its “criticism of the State is very searching, and [its] defence of the rights of the individual very powerful,” like Spencer it “opens ... the way for reconstituting under the heading of 'defence' all the functions of the State.” Section G – Is individualist anarchism capitalistic? *An Anarchist FAQ*
- [202] “The revolution abolishes private ownership of the means of production and distribution, and with it goes capitalistic business. Personal possession remains only in the things you use. Thus, your watch is your own, but the watch factory belongs to the people.” Alexander Berkman. “What Is Communist Anarchism?”
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- [204] Morris, Brian. *Bakunin: The Philosophy of Freedom*. Black Rose Books Ltd., 1993. p. 76.
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- [209] Bakunin, Mikhail (1990). *Statism and Anarchy*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press. ISBN 0-521-36182-6. They [the Marxists] maintain that only a dictatorship – their dictatorship, of course – can create the will of the people, while our answer to this is: No dictatorship can have any other aim but that of self-perpetuation, and it can beget only slavery in the people tolerating it; freedom can be created only by freedom, that is, by a universal rebellion on the part of the people and free organization of the toiling masses from the bottom up.
- [210] Guillaume, James (1876). “Ideas on Social Organization” . Retrieved 2006-04-03.
- [211] “Anarchist communism is also known as anarcho-communism, communist anarchism, or, sometimes, libertarian communism.” “Anarchist communism – an introduction” by libcom.org
- [212] “The terms libertarian communism and anarchist communism thus became synonymous within the international anarchist movement as a result of the close connection they had in Spain (with libertarian communism becoming the prevalent term).” “Anarchist Communism & Libertarian Communism” by Gruppo Comunista Anarchico di Firenze. from “L'informatore di parte” , No. 4, October 1979, quarterly journal of the Gruppo Comunista Anarchico di Firenze, on libcom.org
- [213] “The 'Manifesto of Libertarian Communism' was written in 1953 by Georges Fontenis for the Federation Communiste Libertaire of France. It is one of the key texts of the anarchist-communist current.” “Manifesto of Libertarian Communism” by Georges Fontenis on libcom.org
- [214] “In 1926 a group of exiled Russian anarchists in France, the Delo Truda (Workers' Cause) group, published this pamphlet. It arose not from some academic study but from their experiences in the 1917 Russian revolution.” “The Organizational Platform of the Libertarian Communists” by Delo Truda

- [215] *From Politics Past to Politics Future: An Integrated Analysis of Current and Emergent Paradigms* Alan James Mayne Published 1999 Greenwood Publishing Group 316 pages ISBN 0-275-96151-6. Books.google.com. 1999. ISBN 978-0-275-96151-0. Retrieved 20 September 2010.
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- [217] “Luggi Fabbri” . Dwardmac.pitzer.edu. 2002-10-13. Archived from the original on 2012-03-02. Retrieved 2015-03-16.
- [218] “Platform: Constructive Section” . Nestormakhno.info. Archived from the original on 2012-02-06. Retrieved 2015-03-16.
- [219] Post-left anarcho-communist Bob Black after analysing insurrectionary anarcho-communist Luigi Galleani's view on anarcho-communism went as far as saying that “communism is the final fulfillment of individualism ... The apparent contradiction between individualism and communism rests on a misunderstanding of both ... Subjectivity is also objective: the individual really is subjective. It is nonsense to speak of “emphatically prioritizing the social over the individual,” ... You may as well speak of prioritizing the chicken over the egg. Anarchy is a “method of individualization.” It aims to combine the greatest individual development with the greatest communal unity.” Bob Black. *Nightmares of Reason*.
- [220] “Modern Communists are more individualistic than Stirner. To them, not merely religion, morality, family and State are spooks, but property also is no more than a spook, in whose name the individual is enslaved – and how enslaved! ... Communism thus creates a basis for the liberty and Eigenheit of the individual. I am a Communist because I am an Individualist. Fully as heartily the Communists concur with Stirner when he puts the word take in place of demand – that leads to the dissolution of property, to expropriation. Individualism and Communism go hand in hand.” Max Baginski. “Stirner: The Ego and His Own” on *Mother Earth*. Vol. 2. No. 3 May 1907
- [221] Christopher Gray, *Leaving the Twentieth Century*, p. 88.
- [222] “Toward the Creative Nothing” . *theanarchistlibrary.org*. Archived from the original on 2010-11-28. Retrieved 2010-07-14.
- [223] Peter Kropotkin. *Communism and Anarchy*. Retrieved 2011-07-26. Communism is the one which guarantees the greatest amount of individual liberty – provided that the idea that begets the community be Liberty, Anarchy ... Communism guarantees economic freedom better than any other form of association, because it can guarantee wellbeing, even luxury, in return for a few hours of work instead of a day's work.
- [224] This other society will be libertarian communism, in which social solidarity and free individuality find their full expression, and in which these two ideas develop in perfect harmony. *Organizational Platform of the Libertarian Communists* by Dielo Truda (Workers' Cause)
- [225] “I see the dichotomies made between individualism and communism, individual revolt and class struggle, the struggle against human exploitation and the exploitation of nature as false dichotomies and feel that those who accept them are impoverishing their own critique and struggle.” “MY PERSPECTIVES” by Willful Disobedience Vol. 2, No. 12
- [226] Robert Graham, *Anarchism – A Documentary History of Libertarian Ideas – Volume One: From Anarchy to Anarchism (300CE to 1939)*, Black Rose Books, 2005
- [227] “The Great French Revolution 1789–1793” . *theanarchistlibrary.org*. Retrieved 2011-07-26.
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- [236] Ian Adams (2001). *Political Ideology Today* p. 130. Manchester University Press.
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- [239] Brown, p. 208.
- [240] ““Resisting the Nation State, the pacifist and anarchist tradition” by Geoffrey Ostergaard” . Ppu.org.uk. 6 August 1945. Archived from the original on 2011-05-14. Retrieved 20 September 2010.



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- [247] “Anarchism, insurrections and insurrectionalism” by Joe Black” . Ainfos.ca. 19 July 2006. Archived from the original on 6 December 2010. Retrieved 20 September 2010.
- [248] Writing before the rise of the Carson–Long school of left-libertarianism, historian of American anarchism David DeLeon was disinclined to treat any market-oriented variant of libertarianism as leftist; see DeLeon, David (1978). *The American as Anarchist: Reflections on Indigenous Radicalism*. Baltimore, MD: Johns Hopkins University Press. p. 123.
- [249] Gary Chartier and Charles W. Johnson (eds). *Markets Not Capitalism: Individualist Anarchism Against Bosses, Inequality, Corporate Power, and Structural Poverty*. Minor Compositions; 1st edition (November 5, 2011)
- [250] Gary Chartier has joined Kevin Carson, Charles Johnson, and others (echoing the language of Benjamin Tucker and Thomas Hodgskin) in maintaining that, because of its heritage and its emancipatory goals and potential, radical market anarchism should be seen—by its proponents and by others—as part of the socialist tradition, and that market anarchists can and should call themselves “socialists.” See Gary Chartier, “Advocates of Freed Markets Should Oppose Capitalism,” “Free-Market Anti-Capitalism?” session, annual conference, Association of Private Enterprise Education (Caesar’s Palace, Las Vegas, NV, April 13, 2010); Gary Chartier, “Advocates of Freed Markets Should Embrace ‘Anti-Capitalism’”; Gary Chartier, *Socialist Ends, Market Means: Five Essays*. Cp. Tucker, “Socialism.”
- [251] “But there has always been a market-oriented strand of libertarian socialism that emphasizes voluntary cooperation between producers. And markets, properly understood, have always been about cooperation. As a commenter at Reason magazine’s Hit&Run blog, remarking on Jesse Walker’s link to the Kelly article, put it: “every trade is a cooperative act.” In fact, it’s a fairly common observation among market anarchists that genuinely free markets have the most legitimate claim to the label ‘socialism.’” “Socialism: A Perfectly Good Word Rehabilitated” by Kevin Carson at website of Center for a Stateless Society
- [252] Hamowy, Ronald (editor). *The Encyclopedia of Libertarianism*, SAGE, 2008, pp. 10–12, p 195, ISBN 978-1-4129-6580-4, ISBN 978-1-4129-6580-4
- [253] Edward Stringham, *Anarchy and the law: the political economy of choice*, p 51
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- [260] Ostergaard, Geoffrey. *Resisting the Nation State – the anarchist and pacifist tradition*, *Anarchism As A Tradition of Political Thought*. Peace Pledge Union Publications
- [261] Edward Stringham, *Anarchy, State, and Public Choice*, Cheltenham, UK: Edward Elgar, 2005.
- [262] “The philosophy of “anarcho-capitalism” dreamed up by the “libertarian” New Right, has nothing to do with Anarchism as known by the Anarchist movement proper.” Meltzer, Albert. *Anarchism: Arguments For and Against* AK Press, (2000) p. 50
- [263] “In fact, few anarchists would accept the ‘anarcho-capitalists’ into the anarchist camp since they do not share a concern for economic equality and social justice. Their self-interested, calculating market men would be incapable of practising voluntary co-operation and mutual aid. Anarcho-capitalists, even if they do reject the State, might therefore best be called right-wing libertarians rather than anarchists.” Peter Marshall. *Demanding the Impossible: A History of Anarchism*. Harper Perennial. London. 2008. p. 565
- [264] “It is important to distinguish between anarchism and certain strands of right-wing libertarianism which at times go by the same name (for example, Murray Rothbard’s anarcho-capitalism).” Saul Newman, *The Politics of Postanarchism*, Edinburgh University Press, 2010, p. 43 ISBN 0748634959
- [265] Section F – Is “anarcho”-capitalism a type of anarchism? at An Anarchist FAQ published in physical book form by An Anarchist FAQ as “Volume I”; by AK Press, Oakland/Edinburgh 2008; 558 pages, ISBN 978-1902593906
- [266] “‘Libertarian’ and ‘libertarianism’ are frequently employed by anarchists as synonyms for ‘anarchist’ and ‘anarchism’,

- largely as an attempt to distance themselves from the negative connotations of 'anarchy' and its derivatives. The situation has been vastly complicated in recent decades with the rise of anarcho-capitalism, 'minimal statism' and an extreme right-wing laissez-faire philosophy advocated by such theorists as Murray Rothbard and Robert Nozick and their adoption of the words 'libertarian' and 'libertarianism'. It has therefore now become necessary to distinguish between their right libertarianism and the left libertarianism of the anarchist tradition." *Anarchist Seeds Beneath the Snow: Left-Libertarian Thought and British Writers from William Morris to Colin Ward* by David Goodway. Liverpool University Press. Liverpool. 2006. p. 4
- [267] "Within Libertarianism, Rothbard represents a minority perspective that actually argues for the total elimination of the state. However Rothbard's claim as an anarchist is quickly voided when it is shown that he only wants an end to the public state. In its place he allows countless private states, with each person supplying their own police force, army, and law, or else purchasing these services from capitalist venders...so what remains is shrill anti-statism conjoined to a vacuous freedom in hackneyed defense of capitalism. In sum, the "anarchy" of Libertarianism reduces to a liberal fraud. "Libertarianism: Bogus Anarchy" by Peter Sabatini in issue #41 (Fall/Winter 1994–95) of *Anarchy: A Journal of Desire Armed*
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- [272] "Free Society was the principal English-language forum for anarchist ideas in the United States at the beginning of the twentieth century." *Emma Goldman: Making Speech Free, 1902–1909*, p. 551.
- [273] Sochen, June. 1972. *The New Woman: Feminism in Greenwich Village 1910–1920*. New York: Quadrangle.
- [274] Katz, Jonathan Ned. *Gay American History: Lesbians and Gay Men in the U.S.A.* (New York: Thomas Y. Crowell, 1976)
- [275] Molyneux, Maxine (2001). *Women's movements in international perspective: Latin America and beyond*. Palgrave MacMillan. p. 24. ISBN 978-0-333-78677-2. Retrieved 2015-10-29.
- [276] "E. Armand and "la camaraderie amoureuse" – Revolutionary sexualism and the struggle against jealousy" (PDF). Archived (PDF) from the original on 2011-05-14. Retrieved 20 September 2010.
- [277] "Mujeres Libres - Women anarchists in the Spanish Revolution" . Flag.blackened.net. Archived from the original on 2015-09-26. Retrieved 2015-03-16.
- [278] "Basta pensar en el lesbianismo de Lucía Sánchez Saornil" (PDF). Wzar.unizar.es. Archived from the original (PDF) on 2012-04-02. Retrieved 2015-03-16.
- [279] "R. Fue una época transgresora, emergió el feminismo y la libertad sexual estuvo en el candelero. Hay rastreos de muchas lesbianas escritoras: Carmen Conde[primera académica de número], Victorina Durán, Margarita Xirgu, Ana María Sagi, la periodista Irene Polo, Lucía Sánchez Saornil, fundadora de Mujeres Libres[sección feminista de CNT]... Incluso existía un círculo sáfico en Madrid como lugar de encuentro y tertulia. P. ¿Se declaraban lesbianas? R. Había quien no se escondía mucho, como Polo o Durán, pero lesbiana era un insulto, algo innombrable. Excepto los poemas homosexuales de Sánchez Saornil, sus textos no eran explícitos para poder publicarlos, así que hay que reinterpretarlos." "Tener referentes serios de lesbianas elimina estereotipos" by Juan Fernandez at *El País*
- [280] "infed.org - William Godwin on education" . infed.org. Archived from the original on 2011-05-14. Retrieved 2011-03-28.
- [281] Godwin, William (1793). "1: General Effects of the Political Superintendence of Opinion" . *Enquiry Concerning Political Justice* (1st ed.). London, England: G.G.J. and J. Robinson. Book 4: Of Opinion Considered as a Subject of Political Institution. OCLC 680251053, 642217608, 504755839.
- [282] "Where utopian projectors starting with Plato entertained the idea of creating an ideal species through eugenics and education and a set of universally valid institutions inculcating shared identities, Warren wanted to dissolve such identities in a solution of individual self-sovereignty. His educational experiments, for example, possibly under the influence of the Swiss educational theorist Johann Heinrich Pestalozzi (via Owen), emphasized – as we would expect – the nurturing of the independence and the conscience of individual children, not the inculcation of preconceived values. "Introduction of The Practical Anarchist: Writings of Josiah Warren" by Crispin Sartwell
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- [289] Purkis, Jon (2004). *Changing Anarchism*. Manchester: Manchester University Press. ISBN 0-7190-6694-8.
- [290] British anarchists Stuart Christie and Albert Meltzer manifested that “A.S. Neill is the modern pioneer of libertarian education and of “hearts not heads in the school” . Though he has denied being an anarchist, it would be hard to know how else to describe his philosophy, though he is correct in recognising the difference between revolution in philosophy and pedagogy, and the revolutionary change of society. They are associated but not the same thing.” Stuart Christie and Albert Meltzer. *The Floodgates of Anarchy*
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## 7.9 Further reading

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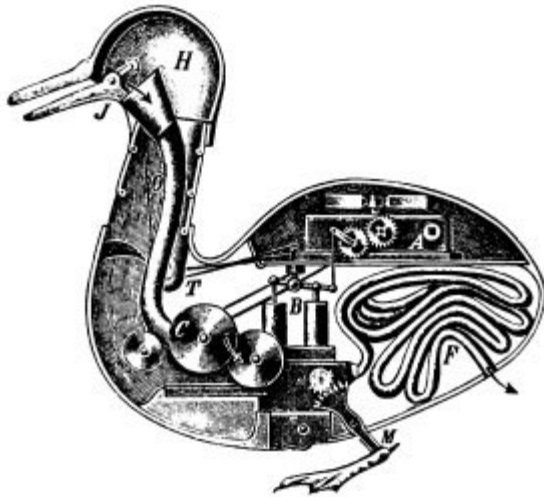
## 7.10 External links

- [Anarchism at DMOZ](#)
- 
- [Anarchism on \*In Our Time\* at the BBC. \(listen now\)](#)



## Chapter 8

# Reductionism



*Descartes held that non-human animals could be reductively explained as automata* —De homine, 1662.

**Reductionism** refers to several related but distinct philosophical positions regarding the connections between phenomena, or theories, “reducing” one to another, usually considered “simpler” or more “basic”.<sup>[1]</sup> *The Oxford Companion to Philosophy* suggests that it is “one of the most used and abused terms in the philosophical lexicon” and suggests a three part division:<sup>[2]</sup>

1. *Ontological reductionism*: a belief that the whole of reality consists of a minimal number of parts
2. *Methodological reductionism*: the scientific attempt to provide explanation in terms of ever smaller entities
3. *Theory reductionism*: the suggestion that a newer theory does not replace or absorb the old, but reduces it to more basic terms. Theory reduction itself is divisible into three: translation, derivation and explanation.<sup>[3]</sup>

Reductionism can be applied to objects, phenomena, explanations, theories, and meanings.<sup>[3]</sup><sup>[4]</sup><sup>[5]</sup>

In the sciences, application of methodological reductionism attempts explanation of entire systems in terms of their individual, constituent parts and their interactions.

For example, the temperature of a gas is reduced to nothing but the average kinetic energy of its molecules in motion. Thomas Nagel speaks of *psychophysical reductionism* (the attempted reduction of psychological phenomena to physics and chemistry), as do others and *physico-chemical reductionism* (the attempted reduction of biology to physics and chemistry), again as do others.<sup>[6]</sup> In a very simplified and sometimes contested form, such reductionism is said to imply that a system is *nothing but* the sum of its parts.<sup>[4]</sup><sup>[7]</sup> However, a more nuanced view is that a system is composed entirely of its parts, but the system will have features that none of the parts have.<sup>[8]</sup> “The point of mechanistic explanations is usually showing *how* the higher level features arise from the parts.”<sup>[7]</sup>

Other definitions are used by other authors. For example, what John Polkinghorne calls *conceptual or epistemological reductionism*<sup>[4]</sup> is the definition provided by Simon Blackburn<sup>[9]</sup> and by Jaegwon Kim:<sup>[10]</sup> that form of reductionism concerning a program of replacing the facts or entities entering statements claimed to be true in one area of discourse with other facts or entities from another area, thereby providing a relationship between them. Such a connection is provided where the same idea can be expressed by “levels” of explanation, with higher levels reducible if need be to lower levels. This use of levels of understanding in part expresses our human limitations in grasping a lot of detail. However, “most philosophers would insist that our role in conceptualizing reality [our need for an hierarchy of “levels” of understanding] does not change the fact that different levels of organization in reality do have different *properties*.”<sup>[8]</sup>

Reductionism strongly reflects a certain perspective on **causality**. In a reductionist framework, the phenomena that can be explained completely in terms of relations between other more fundamental phenomena, are called **epiphenomena**. Often there is an implication that the epiphenomenon exerts no causal agency on the fundamental phenomena that explain it. The epiphenomena are sometimes said to be “nothing but” the outcome of the workings of the fundamental phenomena, although the epiphenomena might be more clearly and efficiently described in very different terms. There is a tendency to avoid taking an epiphenomenon as being important in its

own right. This attitude may extend to cases where the fundamentals are not clearly able to explain the epiphenomena, but are expected to by the speaker. In this way, for example, morality can be deemed to be “nothing but” evolutionary adaptation, and consciousness can be considered “nothing but” the outcome of neurobiological processes.

Reductionism should be distinguished from **eliminationism**: reductionists do not deny the existence of phenomena, but explain them in terms of another reality; eliminationists deny the existence of the phenomena themselves. For example, eliminationists deny the existence of life by their explanation in terms of physical and chemical processes. **Daniel Dennett** denies the existence of consciousness.\*[11]

Reductionism also does not preclude the existence of what might be called **emergent phenomena**, but it does imply the ability to understand those phenomena completely in terms of the processes from which they are composed. This reductionist understanding is very different from **emergentism**, which intends that what emerges in “emergence” is more than the sum of the processes from which it emerges.\*[12]

## 8.1 Types

Most philosophers delineate three types of reductionism and antireductionism.\*[2]

### 8.1.1 Ontological reductionism

Ontological reductionism is the belief that reality is composed of a minimum number of kinds of entities or substances. This claim is usually **metaphysical**, and is most commonly a form of **monism**, in effect claiming that all objects, properties and events are reducible to a single substance. (A **dualist** who is an ontological reductionist would believe that everything is reducible to two substances—as one possible example, a dualist might claim that reality is composed of “**matter**” and “**spirit**”.)

Richard Jones divides ontological reductionism into two: the reductionism of substances (e.g., the reduction of mind to matter) and the reduction of the number of structures operating in nature (e.g., the reduction of one physical force to another). This permits scientists and philosophers to affirm the former while being antireductionists regarding the latter.\*[13]

**Nancey Murphy** has claimed that there are two species of ontological reductionism: one that denies that wholes are anything more than their parts; and the stronger thesis of atomist reductionism that wholes are not “really real”. She admits that the phrase “really real” is apparently senseless but nonetheless has tried to explicate the supposed difference between the two.\*[14]

Ontological reductionism denies the idea of ontological **emergence**, and claims that emergence is an **epistemological** phenomenon that only exists through analysis or description of a system, and does not exist on a fundamental level.\*[15]

Ontological reductionism takes two different forms: *token ontological reductionism* and *type ontological reductionism*.

Token ontological reductionism is the idea that every item that exists is a sum item. For perceivable items, it says that every perceivable item is a sum of items at a smaller level of complexity. Token ontological reduction of biological things to chemical things is generally accepted.

Type ontological reductionism is the idea that every type of item is a sum type of item, and that every perceivable type of item is a sum of types of items at a lower level of complexity. Type ontological reduction of biological things to chemical things is often rejected.\*[16]

**Michael Ruse** has criticized ontological reductionism as an improper argument against **vitalism**.\*[17]

### 8.1.2 Methodological reductionism

Methodological reductionism is the position that the best scientific strategy is to attempt to reduce explanations to the smallest possible entities. Methodological reductionism would thus hold that the atomic explanation of a substance's boiling point is preferable to the chemical explanation, and that an explanation based on even smaller particles (**quarks** and **leptons**, perhaps) would be even better.

Methodological reductionism, therefore, is the position that all scientific theories either can or should be reduced to a single super-theory through the process of theoretical reduction.

### 8.1.3 Theory reductionism

Theory reduction is the process by which one theory absorbs another. For example, both **Kepler's** laws of the motion of the **planets** and **Galileo's** theories of motion worked out for terrestrial objects are reducible to Newtonian theories of mechanics because all the explanatory power of the former are contained within the latter. Furthermore, the reduction is considered to be beneficial because **Newtonian mechanics** is a more general theory—that is, it explains more events than Galileo's or Kepler's. Theoretical reduction, therefore, is the reduction of one explanation or theory to another—that is, it is the absorption of one of our ideas about a particular thing into another idea.

## 8.2 In science

Reductionist thinking and methods form the basis for many of the well-developed areas of modern science, including much of physics, chemistry and cell biology. Classical mechanics in particular is seen as a reductionist framework, and statistical mechanics can be viewed as a reconciliation of macroscopic thermodynamic laws with the reductionist approach of explaining macroscopic properties in terms of microscopic components.

In science, reductionism implies that certain fields of study are based on areas that study smaller spatial scales or organizational units. While it is commonly accepted that the foundations of chemistry are based in physics, and molecular biology is rooted in chemistry, similar statements become controversial when one considers less rigorously defined intellectual pursuits. For example, claims that sociology is based on psychology, or that economics is based on sociology and psychology would be met with reservations. These claims are difficult to substantiate even though there are clear connections between these fields (for instance, most would agree that psychology can affect and inform economics). The limit of reductionism's usefulness stems from emergent properties of complex systems, which are more common at certain levels of organization. For example, certain aspects of evolutionary psychology and sociobiology are rejected by some who claim that complex systems are inherently irreducible and that a holistic approach is needed to understand them.

Some strong reductionists believe that the behavioral sciences should become “genuine” scientific disciplines based on genetic biology, and on the systematic study of culture (see Richard Dawkins's concept of memes). In his book *The Blind Watchmaker*, Dawkins introduced the term “hierarchical reductionism” [18] to describe the view that complex systems can be described with a hierarchy of organizations, each of which is only described in terms of objects one level down in the hierarchy. He provides the example of a computer, which under hierarchical reductionism is explained in terms of the operation of hard drives, processors, and memory, but not on the level of AND OR gates, or on the even lower level of electrons in a semiconductor medium.

Others argue that inappropriate use of reductionism limits our understanding of complex systems. In particular, ecologist Robert Ulanowicz says that science must develop techniques to study ways in which larger scales of organization influence smaller ones, and also ways in which feedback loops create structure at a given level, independently of details at a lower level of organization. He advocates (and uses) information theory as a framework to study propensities in natural systems. [19] Ulanowicz attributes these criticisms of reductionism to the philosopher Karl Popper and biologist Robert Rosen. [20]

The idea that phenomena such as emergence and work

within the field of complex systems theory pose limits to reductionism has been advocated by Stuart Kauffman. [21] Emergence is especially relevant when systems exhibit historicity. [22] Emergence is strongly related to nonlinearity. [23] The limits of the application of reductionism are claimed to be especially evident at levels of organization with higher amounts of complexity, including living cells, [24] neural networks, ecosystems, society, and other systems formed from assemblies of large numbers of diverse components linked by multiple feedback loops. [24] [25]

Nobel laureate P.W. Anderson used the idea that symmetry breaking is an example of an emergent phenomenon in his 1972 *Science* paper “More is different” to make an argument about the limitations of reductionism. [26] One observation he made was that the sciences can be arranged roughly in a linear hierarchy —particle physics, many body physics, chemistry, molecular biology, cellular biology, physiology, psychology, social sciences—in that the elementary entities of one science obeys the laws of the science that precedes it in the hierarchy; yet this does not imply that one science is just an applied version of the science that precedes it. He writes that “At each stage, entirely new laws, concepts and generalizations are necessary, requiring inspiration and creativity to just as great a degree as in the previous one. Psychology is not applied biology nor is biology applied chemistry.”

Disciplines such as cybernetics and systems theory embrace a non-reductionist view of science, sometimes going as far as explaining phenomena at a given level of hierarchy in terms of phenomena at a higher level, in a sense, the opposite of a reductionist approach. [27]

## 8.3 In mathematics

In mathematics, reductionism can be interpreted as the philosophy that all mathematics can (or ought to) be built on a common foundation, which is usually axiomatic set theory. Ernst Zermelo was one of the major advocates of such a view; he also developed much of axiomatic set theory. It has been argued that the generally accepted method of justifying mathematical axioms by their usefulness in common practice can potentially undermine Zermelo's reductionist program. [28]

As an alternative to set theory, Jouko Väänänen has argued for second-order logic as a foundation for mathematics instead of set theory, [29] whereas others have argued for category theory as a foundation for certain aspects of mathematics. [30] [31]

The incompleteness theorems of Kurt Gödel, published in 1931, raised doubts about the attainability of an axiomatic foundation for all of mathematics. Any such foundation would have to include axioms powerful enough to describe the arithmetic of the natural numbers

(a subset of all mathematics). Yet Gödel proved that for any self-consistent recursive axiomatic system powerful enough to describe the arithmetic of the natural numbers, there are propositions about the natural numbers that cannot be proved from the axioms, but which we can prove in the natural language with which we described the axioms. Such propositions are known as formally undecidable propositions. For example, the *continuum hypothesis* is undecidable in the *Zermelo-Fraenkel set theory* as shown by *Cohen*.

## 8.4 In religion

Religious reductionism generally attempts to explain religion by boiling it down to certain nonreligious causes. A few examples of reductionistic explanations for the presence of religion are: that religion can be reduced to humanity's conceptions of right and wrong, that religion is fundamentally a primitive attempt at controlling our environments, that religion is a way to explain the existence of a physical world, and that religion confers an enhanced survivability for members of a group and so is reinforced by *natural selection*.\*[32] Anthropologists *Edward Burnett Tylor* and *James George Frazer* employed some *religious reductionist arguments*.\*[33] *Sigmund Freud* held that religion is nothing more than an illusion, or even a mental illness, and *Marx* claimed that religion is “the sigh of the oppressed,” and the *opium of the people* providing only “the illusory happiness of the people,” thus providing two influential examples of reductionistic views against the idea of religion.

## 8.5 In linguistics

Linguistic reductionism is the idea that everything can be described or explained in a language with a limited number of core concepts, and combinations of those concepts.\*[34] A key example is the language *Toki Pona*.

## 8.6 In philosophy

The concept of *downward causation* poses an alternative to reductionism within philosophy. This view is developed and explored by *Peter Bøgh Andersen*, *Claus Emmeche*, *Niels Ole Finnemann*, and *Peder Voetmann Christiansen*, among others. These philosophers explore ways in which one can talk about phenomena at a larger-scale level of organization exerting causal influence on a smaller-scale level, and find that some, but not all proposed types of downward causation are compatible with science. In particular, they find that constraint is one way in which downward causation can operate.\*[35] The notion of causality as constraint has also been explored as a way to shed light on scientific concepts such as

*self-organization*, *natural selection*, *adaptation*, and *control*.\*[36]

### 8.6.1 Free will

Main article: *Free will*

Philosophers of the Enlightenment worked to insulate human free will from reductionism. *Descartes* separated the material world of mechanical necessity from the world of mental free will. German philosophers introduced the concept of the “*noumenal*” realm that is not governed by the deterministic laws of “*phenomenal*” nature, where every event is completely determined by chains of causality.\*[37] The most influential formulation was by *Immanuel Kant*, who distinguished between the causal deterministic framework the mind imposes on the world—the phenomenal realm—and the world as it exists for itself, the noumenal realm, which included free will. To insulate theology from reductionism, 19th century post-Enlightenment German theologians moved in a new direction, led by *Friedrich Schleiermacher* and *Albrecht Ritschl*. They took the *Romantic* approach of rooting religion in the inner world of the human spirit, so that it is a person's feeling or sensibility about spiritual matters that comprises religion.\*[38]

## 8.7 Antireductionism

Main article: *Antireductionism*

The antireductionist takes this position as a minimum requirement upon the reductionist: “What is unclear is how the pre-theoretical intuitions [for example, of free will] are to be accommodated theoretically within favored analyses... At the very least the anti-reductionist is owed an account of why the intuitions arise if they are not accurate.”\*[39]

A contrast to the reductionist approach is *holism* or *emergentism*. Holism is the idea that things can have properties, (emergent properties), as a whole that are not explainable from the sum of their parts. The principle of holism was concisely summarized by *Aristotle* in the *Metaphysics*: “The whole is more than the sum of its parts” .

The term *greedy reductionism*, coined by *Daniel Dennett*, is used to criticize inappropriate use of reductionism.

## 8.8 Alternatives

The development of *systems thinking* has provided methods for tackling issues in a *holistic* rather than a reductionist way, and many scientists approach their work in a



**holistic paradigm.** \* [40] When the terms are used in a scientific context, holism and reductionism refer primarily to what sorts of **models** or theories offer valid explanations of the natural world; the scientific method of falsifying hypotheses, checking empirical data against theory, is largely unchanged, but the approach guides which theories are considered. The conflict between reductionism and holism in science is not universal—it usually centers on whether or not a holistic or reductionist approach is appropriate in the context of studying a specific system or phenomenon.

In many cases (such as the **kinetic theory** of gases), given a good understanding of the components of the system, one can predict all the important properties of the system as a whole. In other systems, **emergent properties** of the system are said to be almost impossible to predict from knowledge of the parts of the system. **Complexity theory** studies systems and properties of the latter type.

**Alfred North Whitehead** set his metaphysical thinking in opposition to reductionism. He refers to this as the “fallacy of the misplaced concreteness”. His scheme set out to frame a rational, general understanding of things, that was derived from our reality.

**Sven Erik Jorgensen**, an **ecologist**, lays out both theoretical and practical arguments for a **holistic** approach in certain areas of science, especially **ecology**. He argues that many systems are so complex that it will not ever be possible to describe all their details. Drawing an analogy to the Heisenberg **uncertainty principle** in physics, he argues that many interesting and relevant ecological phenomena cannot be replicated in laboratory conditions, and thus cannot be measured or observed without influencing and changing the system in some way. He also points to the importance of interconnectedness in biological systems. His viewpoint is that science can only progress by outlining what questions are unanswerable and by using models that do not attempt to explain everything in terms of smaller hierarchical levels of organization, but instead model them on the scale of the system itself, taking into account some (but not all) factors from levels both higher and lower in the hierarchy. \* [41]

## 8.9 Criticism

*Fragmentalism* is an alternative term for ontological reductionism, \* [42] although *fragmentalism* is frequently used in a **pejorative** sense. \* [43] **Anti-realists** use the term *fragmentalism* in arguments that the world does not exist of separable entities, instead consisting of wholes. For example, advocates of this position hold that:

The linear deterministic approach to nature and technology promoted a fragmented perception of reality, and a loss of the ability to foresee, to adequately evaluate, in all their

complexity, global crises in ecology, civilization and education. \* [44]

The term “*fragmentalism*” is usually applied to reductionist modes of thought, frequently with the related pejorative term of *scientism*. This usage is popular amongst some ecological activists:

There is a need now to move away from **scientism** and the ideology of cause-and-effect determinism toward a radical **empiricism**, such as **William James** proposed, as an **epistemology** of science. \* [45]

These perspectives are not new and in the early twentieth century, **William James** noted that rationalist science emphasized what he termed fragmentation and disconnection. \* [46]

Such views also underpin many criticisms of the scientific method:

The scientific method only acknowledges monophasic consciousness. The method is a specialized system that focuses on studying small and distinctive parts in isolation, which results in fragmented knowledge. \* [46]

An alternative usage of this term is in **cognitive psychology**. Here, **George Kelly** developed “constructive alternativism” as a form of **personal construct psychology**, this provided an alternative to what he saw as “accumulative fragmentalism”. In this theory, knowledge is seen as the construction of successful **mental models** of the exterior world, rather than the accumulation of independent “nuggets of truth”. \* [47]

## 8.10 See also

- **Antireductionism**
- **Antiscience**
- **Aristotle**
- **Eliminativism**
- **Emergentism**
- **Fallacy of composition**
- **Holism**
- **Holistic science**
- **Materialism**
- **Multiple realizability** was used as a source of arguments against reductionism.

- Philosophy of mind
- Physicalism
- Physical ontology
- Scientism
- Symmetry breaking
- Theology
- *Two Dogmas of Empiricism*

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### 8.13 External links

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- Monica Anderson: Reductionism Considered Harmful



## Chapter 9

# Nihilism

“Nihilist” redirects here. For other uses, see [Nihilism](#) (disambiguation) and [Nihilist](#) (disambiguation).

**Nihilism** (/ˈnaɪ.ɪlɪzəm/ or /ˈniː.ɪlɪzəm/; from the Latin *ni-hil*, nothing) is a philosophical doctrine that suggests the lack of belief in one or more reputedly meaningful aspects of life. Most commonly, nihilism is presented in the form of [existential nihilism](#), which argues that life is without objective meaning, purpose, or [intrinsic value](#).<sup>[1]</sup> [Moral nihilists](#) assert that there is no inherent [morality](#), and that accepted moral values are abstractly contrived. Nihilism may also take [epistemological](#), [ontological](#), or [metaphysical](#) forms, meaning respectively that, in some aspect, knowledge is not possible, or reality does not actually exist.

The term is sometimes used in association with [anomie](#) to explain the general mood of [despair](#) at a perceived pointlessness of existence that one may develop upon realising there are no necessary norms, rules, or laws.<sup>[2]</sup> Movements such as [Futurism](#) and [deconstruction](#),<sup>[3]</sup> among others, have been identified by commentators<sup>[4]</sup> as “nihilistic”.

Nihilism is also a characteristic that has been ascribed to time periods: for example, [Jean Baudrillard](#) and others have called [postmodernity](#) a nihilistic epoch,<sup>[5]</sup> and some [religious theologians](#) and figures of religious authority have asserted that postmodernity<sup>[6]</sup> and many aspects of [modernity](#)<sup>[3]</sup> represent a rejection of [theism](#), and that such rejection of their theistic doctrine entails nihilism.

## 9.1 Forms

Nihilism has many definitions, and thus can describe multiple arguably independent philosophical positions.

### 9.1.1 Metaphysical

Main article: [Metaphysical nihilism](#)

Metaphysical nihilism is the [philosophical](#) theory that

posits that concrete objects and physical constructs might not exist in the [possible world](#), or that even if there exist possible worlds that contain some concrete objects, there is at least one that contains only [abstract objects](#).

Extreme metaphysical nihilism is commonly defined as the belief that nothing exists as a correspondent component of the self-efficient world.<sup>[7]</sup> The American Heritage Medical Dictionary defines one form of nihilism as “an extreme form of skepticism that denies all existence.”<sup>[8]</sup> A similar skepticism concerning the concrete world can be found in [solipsism](#). However, despite the fact that both deny the certainty of objects' true existence, the nihilist would deny the existence of [self](#) whereas the solipsist would affirm it.<sup>[9]</sup> Both these positions are considered forms of [anti-realism](#).<sup>[10]</sup>

### 9.1.2 Epistemological

Main article: [Epistemological nihilism](#)

Epistemological nihilism is a form of [skepticism](#) in which all knowledge is accepted as being possibly untrue or as being unable to be confirmed true.

### 9.1.3 Mereological

Main article: [Mereological nihilism](#)

Mereological nihilism (also called [compositional nihilism](#)) is the position that objects with proper parts do not exist (not only objects in space, but also objects existing in time do not have any temporal parts), and only basic building blocks without parts exist, and thus the world we see and experience full of objects with parts is a product of human misperception (i.e., if we could see clearly, we would not perceive compositive objects).

This interpretation of existence must be based on resolution. The resolution with which humans see and perceive the “improper parts” of the world is not an objective fact of reality, but is rather an implicit trait that can only be qualitatively explored and expressed. Therefore, there is no arguable way to surmise or measure the validity of

mereological nihilism. Example: An ant can get lost on a large cylindrical object because the circumference of the object is so large with respect to the ant that the ant effectively feels as though the object has no curvature. Thus, the resolution with which the ant views the world it exists “within” is a very important determining factor in how the ant experiences this “within the world” feeling.

### 9.1.4 Existential

Main article: [Existential nihilism](#)

Existential nihilism is the belief that life has no intrinsic



The Nihilist by [Paul Merwart](#) (1882)

meaning or value. With respect to the universe, existential nihilism posits that a single human or even the entire human species is insignificant, without purpose and unlikely to change in the totality of existence. The meaninglessness of life is largely explored in the philosophical school of [existentialism](#).

### 9.1.5 Moral

Main article: [Moral nihilism](#)

Moral nihilism, also known as ethical nihilism, is the [meta-ethical](#) view that morality does not exist as something inherent to objective reality; therefore no action is necessarily preferable to any other. For example, a moral nihilist would say that killing someone, for whatever reason, is not inherently right or wrong.

Other nihilists may argue not that there is no morality at all, but that if it does exist, it is a human construction and thus artificial, wherein any and all meaning is relative for different possible outcomes. As an example, if someone kills someone else, such a nihilist might argue that killing is not inherently a bad thing, or bad independently from our moral beliefs, because of the way morality is constructed as some rudimentary dichotomy. What is said to be a bad thing is given a higher negative weighting than what is called good: as a result, killing the individual was bad because it did not let the individual live, which was arbitrarily given a positive weighting. In this way a moral

nihilist believes that all moral claims are void of any truth value. An alternative scholarly perspective is that moral nihilism is a morality in itself. Cooper writes, “In the widest sense of the word 'morality', moral nihilism is a morality.” <sup>[11]</sup>

### 9.1.6 Political

Political nihilism, a branch of nihilism, follows the characteristic nihilist's rejection of non-rationalized or non-proven assertions; in this case the necessity of the most fundamental social and political structures, such as [government](#), [family](#), and [law](#). An influential analysis of political nihilism is presented by [Leo Strauss](#). <sup>[12]</sup>

### Russian movement

Main article: [Nihilist movement](#)

The Russian Nihilist movement was a Russian trend in the 1860s that rejected all authority. <sup>[13]</sup> Their name derives from the Latin *nihil*, meaning “nothing”. After the assassination of Tsar [Alexander II](#) in 1881, the Nihilists gained a reputation throughout Europe as proponents of the use of violence for political change. The Nihilists expressed anger at what they described as the abusive nature of the [Eastern Orthodox Church](#) and of the tsarist monarchy, and at the domination of the Russian economy by the aristocracy. Although the term *Nihilism* was coined by the German theologian [Friedrich Heinrich Jacobi](#) (1743–1818), its widespread usage began with the 1862 novel *Fathers and Sons* by the Russian author [Ivan Turgenev](#). The main character of the novel, [Eugene Bazarov](#), who describes himself as a Nihilist, wants to educate the people. The “go to the people – be the people” campaign reached its height in the 1870s, during which underground groups such as the [Circle of Tchaikovsky](#), the [People's Will](#), and [Land and Liberty](#) formed. It became known as the [Narodnik](#) movement, whose members believed that the newly freed [serfs](#) were merely being sold into [wage slavery](#) in the onset of the [Industrial Revolution](#), and that the middle and upper classes had effectively replaced landowners. The Russian state attempted to suppress the nihilist movement. In actions described by the Nihilists as [propaganda of the deed](#) many government officials were assassinated. In 1881 [Alexander II](#) was killed on the very day he had approved a proposal to call a representative assembly to consider new reforms.

## 9.2 History

### 9.2.1 19th century

The term *nihilism* was first used by [Friedrich Heinrich Jacobi](#) (1743–1819). Jacobi used the term to characterize



The novelist *Ivan S. Turgenev* made the term *nihilism* popular.

rationalism\* [14] and in particular Immanuel Kant's "critical" philosophy to carry out a *reductio ad absurdum* according to which all rationalism (philosophy as criticism) reduces to nihilism—and thus it should be avoided and replaced with a return to some type of faith and revelation. Bret W. Davis writes, for example, "The first philosophical development of the idea of nihilism is generally ascribed to Friedrich Jacobi, who in a famous letter criticized Fichte's idealism as falling into nihilism. According to Jacobi, Fichte's absolutization of the ego (the 'absolute I' that posits the 'not-I') is an inflation of subjectivity that denies the absolute transcendence of God." \* [15] A related but oppositional concept is *fideism*, which sees reason as hostile and inferior to faith.

With the popularizing of the word *nihilism* by *Ivan Turgenev*, a new Russian political movement called the *Nihilist movement* adopted the term. They supposedly called themselves nihilists because nothing "that then existed found favor in their eyes" . \* [16]

## 9.2.2 Kierkegaard

Main article: *Philosophy of Søren Kierkegaard*

*Søren Kierkegaard* (1813–1855) posited an early form of nihilism, which he referred to as *leveling*. \* [17] He saw levelling as the process of suppressing individuality to a point where the individual's uniqueness becomes non-existent and nothing meaningful in his existence can be affirmed:

Levelling at its maximum is like the



unfinished sketch c. 1840 of *Søren Kierkegaard* by his cousin *Niels Christian Kierkegaard*

stillness of death, where one can hear one's own heartbeat, a stillness like death, into which nothing can penetrate, in which everything sinks, powerless. One person can head a rebellion, but one person cannot head this levelling process, for that would make him a leader and he would avoid being levelled. Each individual can in his little circle participate in this levelling, but it is an abstract process, and levelling is abstraction conquering individuality.

—*Søren Kierkegaard*, *The Present Age*, translated by *Alexander Dru* with Foreword by *Walter Kaufmann*, 1962, pp. 51–53

Kierkegaard, an advocate of a *philosophy of life*, generally argued against levelling and its nihilist consequence, although he believed it would be "genuinely educative to live in the age of levelling [because] people will be forced to face the judgement of [levelling] alone." \* [18] George Cotkin asserts Kierkegaard was against "the standardization and levelling of belief, both spiritual and political, in the nineteenth century [and he] opposed tendencies in *mass culture* to reduce the individual to a cipher of conformity and deference to the dominant opinion." \* [19] In his day, *tabloids* (like the Danish magazine *Corsaren*) and apostate *Christianity* were instruments of levelling



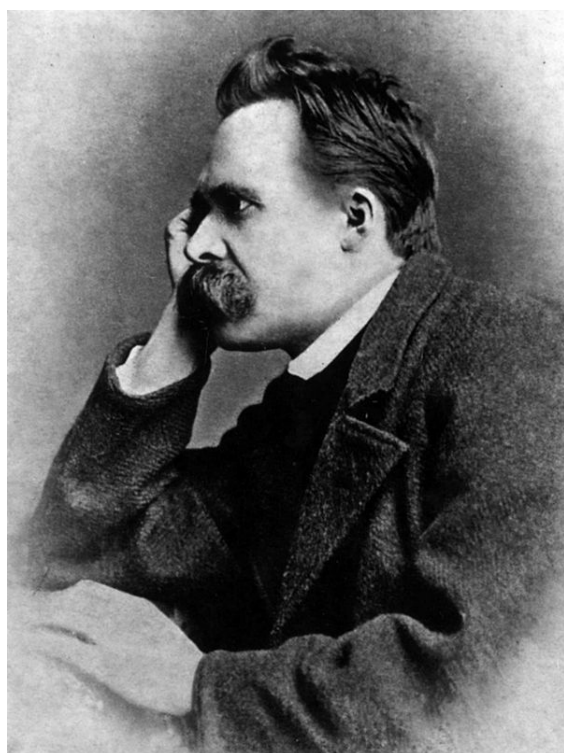
and contributed to the “reflective **apathetic** age” of 19th century Europe. \* [20] Kierkegaard argues that individuals who can overcome the levelling process are stronger for it and that it represents a step in the right direction towards “becoming a true self.” \* [18] \* [21] As we must overcome levelling, \* [22] **Hubert Dreyfus** and **Jane Rubin** argue that Kierkegaard's interest, “in an increasingly nihilistic age, is in *how* we can recover the sense that our lives are meaningful” . \* [23]

Note however that Kierkegaard's meaning of “nihilism” differs from the modern definition in the sense that, for Kierkegaard, levelling led to a life lacking meaning, purpose or value, \* [20] whereas the modern interpretation of nihilism posits that there was never any meaning, purpose or value to begin with.

### 9.2.3 Nietzsche

Main article: [Philosophy of Friedrich Nietzsche](#)

Nihilism is often associated with the German philoso-



*Friedrich Wilhelm Nietzsche*

pher **Friedrich Nietzsche**, who provided a detailed diagnosis of nihilism as a widespread phenomenon of Western culture. Though the notion appears frequently throughout Nietzsche's work, he uses the term in a variety of ways, with different meanings and connotations. **Karen Carr** describes Nietzsche's characterization of nihilism “as a condition of tension, as a disproportion between what we want to value (or need) and how the world appears to operate.” \* [24] When we find out that the world does not possess the objective value or meaning that we want it

to have or have long since believed it to have, we find ourselves in a crisis. \* [25] Nietzsche asserts that with the decline of Christianity and the rise of physiological decadence, nihilism is in fact characteristic of the modern age, \* [26] though he implies that the rise of nihilism is still incomplete and that it has yet to be overcome. \* [27] Though the problem of nihilism becomes especially explicit in Nietzsche's **notebooks** (published posthumously), it is mentioned repeatedly in his published works and is closely connected to many of the problems mentioned there.

Nietzsche characterized nihilism as emptying the world and especially human existence of meaning, purpose, comprehensible truth, or essential value. This observation stems in part from Nietzsche's **perspectivism**, or his notion that “knowledge” is always by someone of some thing: it is always bound by perspective, and it is never mere fact. \* [28] Rather, there are interpretations through which we understand the world and give it meaning. Interpreting is something we can not go without; in fact, it is something we *need*. One way of interpreting the world is through morality, as one of the fundamental ways that people make sense of the world, especially in regard to their own thoughts and actions. Nietzsche distinguishes a morality that is strong or healthy, meaning that the person in question is aware that he constructs it himself, from weak morality, where the interpretation is projected on to something external. Regardless of its strength, morality presents us with meaning, whether this is created or 'implanted,' which helps us get through life. \* [29]

Nietzsche discusses Christianity, one of the major topics in his work, at length in the context of the problem of nihilism in his notebooks, in a chapter entitled “European Nihilism” . \* [30] Here he states that the Christian moral doctrine provides people with **intrinsic value**, belief in God (which **justifies** the evil in the world) and a basis for **objective knowledge**. In this sense, in constructing a world where objective knowledge is possible, Christianity is an antidote against a primal form of nihilism, against the despair of meaninglessness. However, it is exactly the element of truthfulness in Christian doctrine that is its undoing: in its drive towards truth, Christianity eventually finds itself to be a construct, which leads to its own dissolution. It is therefore that Nietzsche states that we have outgrown Christianity “not because we lived too far from it, rather because we lived too close” . \* [31] As such, the self-dissolution of Christianity constitutes yet another form of nihilism. Because Christianity was an interpretation that posited itself as *the* interpretation, Nietzsche states that this dissolution leads beyond **skepticism** to a distrust of *all* meaning. \* [32] \* [33]

**Stanley Rosen** identifies Nietzsche's concept of nihilism with a situation of meaninglessness, in which “everything is permitted.” According to him, the loss of higher metaphysical values that exist in contrast to the base reality of the world, or merely human ideas, gives rise to the idea that all human ideas are therefore valueless. Reject-



ing idealism thus results in nihilism, because only similarly transcendent ideals live up to the previous standards that the nihilist still implicitly holds.\*[34] The inability for Christianity to serve as a source of valuating the world is reflected in Nietzsche's famous aphorism of the madman in *The Gay Science*.\*[35] The death of God, in particular the statement that “we killed him”, is similar to the *self*-dissolution of Christian doctrine: due to the advances of the sciences, which for Nietzsche show that man is the product of *evolution*, that Earth has no *special place* among the stars and that *history* is not *progressive*, the Christian notion of God can no longer serve as a basis for a morality.

One such reaction to the loss of meaning is what Nietzsche calls *passive nihilism*, which he recognises in the pessimistic philosophy of Schopenhauer. Schopenhauer's doctrine, which Nietzsche also refers to as *Western Buddhism*, advocates a separating of oneself from will and desires in order to reduce suffering. Nietzsche characterises this *ascetic* attitude as a “will to *nothingness*”, whereby life turns away from itself, as there is nothing of value to be found in the world. This mowing away of all value in the world is characteristic of the nihilist, although in this, the nihilist appears inconsistent.\*[36]

A nihilist is a man who judges of the world as it is that it ought *not* to be, and of the world as it ought to be that it does not exist. According to this view, our existence (action, suffering, willing, feeling) has no meaning: the pathos of 'in vain' is the nihilists' pathos — at the same time, as pathos, an inconsistency on the part of the nihilists.

—Friedrich Nietzsche, KSA 12:9 [60], taken from *The Will to Power*, section 585, translated by Walter Kaufmann

Nietzsche's relation to the problem of nihilism is a complex one. He approaches the problem of nihilism as deeply personal, stating that this predicament of the modern world is a problem that has “become conscious” in him.\*[37] Furthermore, he emphasises both the danger of nihilism and the possibilities it offers, as seen in his statement that “I praise, I do not reproach, [nihilism's] arrival. I believe it is one of the greatest crises, a moment of the deepest self-reflection of humanity. Whether man recovers from it, whether he becomes master of this crisis, is a question of his strength!”\*[38] According to Nietzsche, it is only when nihilism is *overcome* that a culture can have a true foundation upon which to thrive. He wished to hasten its coming only so that he could also hasten its ultimate departure.\*[26]

He states that there is at least the possibility of another type of nihilist in the wake of Christianity's self-dissolution, one that does *not* stop after the destruction of all value and meaning and succumb to the following

nothingness. This alternate, 'active' nihilism on the other hand destroys to level the field for constructing something new. This form of nihilism is characterized by Nietzsche as “a sign of strength,”\*[39] a wilful destruction of the old values to wipe the slate clean and lay down one's own beliefs and interpretations, contrary to the passive nihilism that resigns itself with the decomposition of the old values. This wilful destruction of values and the overcoming of the condition of nihilism by the constructing of new meaning, this active nihilism, could be related to what Nietzsche elsewhere calls a 'free spirit'\*[40] or the *Übermensch* from *Thus Spoke Zarathustra* and *The Antichrist*, the model of the strong individual who posits his own values and lives his life as if it were his own work of art. It may be questioned, though, whether “active nihilism” is indeed the correct term for this stance, and some question whether Nietzsche takes the problems nihilism poses seriously enough.\*[41]

#### 9.2.4 Heidegger's interpretation of Nietzsche

Martin Heidegger's interpretation of Nietzsche influenced many postmodern thinkers who investigated the problem of nihilism as put forward by Nietzsche. Only recently has Heidegger's influence on Nietzschean nihilism research faded.\*[42] As early as the 1930s, Heidegger was giving lectures on Nietzsche's thought.\*[43] Given the importance of Nietzsche's contribution to the topic of nihilism, Heidegger's influential interpretation of Nietzsche is important for the historical development of the term *nihilism*.

Heidegger's method of researching and teaching Nietzsche is explicitly his own. He does not specifically try to present Nietzsche as Nietzsche. He rather tries to incorporate Nietzsche's thoughts into his own philosophical system of *Being, Time and Dasein*.\*[44] In his *Nihilism as Determined by the History of Being* (1944–46),\*[45] Heidegger tries to understand Nietzsche's nihilism as trying to achieve a victory through the devaluation of the, until then, highest values. The principle of this devaluation is, according to Heidegger, the *Will to Power*. The *Will to Power* is also the principle of every earlier *valuation* of values.\*[46] How does this devaluation occur and why is this nihilistic? One of Heidegger's main critiques on philosophy is that philosophy, and more specifically metaphysics, has forgotten to discriminate between investigating the notion of a *Being* (*Seiende*) and *Being* (*Sein*). According to Heidegger, the history of Western thought can be seen as the history of metaphysics. And because metaphysics has forgotten to ask about the notion of *Being* (what Heidegger calls *Seinsvergessenheit*), it is a history about the destruction of *Being*. That is why Heidegger calls metaphysics nihilistic.\*[47] This makes Nietzsche's metaphysics not a victory over nihilism, but a perfection of it.\*[48]

Heidegger, in his interpretation of Nietzsche, has been inspired by Ernst Jünger. Many references to Jünger can be found in Heidegger's lectures on Nietzsche. For example, in a letter to the rector of Freiburg University of November 4, 1945, Heidegger, inspired by Jünger, tries to explain the notion of “God is dead” as the “reality of the Will to Power.” Heidegger also praises Jünger for defending Nietzsche against a too biological or anthropological reading during the Third Reich.\*[49]

Heidegger's interpretation of Nietzsche influenced a number of important postmodernist thinkers. Gianni Vattimo points at a back-and-forth movement in European thought, between Nietzsche and Heidegger. During the 1960s, a Nietzschean 'renaissance' began, culminating in the work of Mazzino Montinari and Giorgio Colli. They began work on a new and complete edition of Nietzsche's collected works, making Nietzsche more accessible for scholarly research. Vattimo explains that with this new edition of Colli and Montinari, a critical reception of Heidegger's interpretation of Nietzsche began to take shape. Like other contemporary French and Italian philosophers, Vattimo does not want, or only partially wants, to rely on Heidegger for understanding Nietzsche. On the other hand, Vattimo judges Heidegger's intentions authentic enough to keep pursuing them.\*[50] Philosophers who Vattimo exemplifies as a part of this back and forth movement are French philosophers Deleuze, Foucault and Derrida. Italian philosophers of this same movement are Cacciari, Severino and himself.\*[51] Jürgen Habermas, Jean-François Lyotard and Richard Rorty are also philosophers who are influenced by Heidegger's interpretation of Nietzsche.\*[52]

## 9.2.5 Postmodernism

Postmodern and poststructuralist thought question the very grounds on which Western cultures have based their 'truths': absolute knowledge and meaning, a 'decentralization' of authorship, the accumulation of positive knowledge, historical progress, and certain ideals and practices of humanism and the Enlightenment.

Jacques Derrida, whose deconstruction is perhaps most commonly labeled nihilistic, did not himself make the nihilistic move that others have claimed. Derridean deconstructionists argue that this approach rather frees texts, individuals or organizations from a restrictive truth, and that deconstruction opens up the possibility of other ways of being.\*[53] Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak, for example, uses deconstruction to create an ethics of opening up Western scholarship to the voice of the subaltern and to philosophies outside of the canon of western texts.\*[54] Derrida himself built a philosophy based upon a 'responsibility to the other'.\*[55] Deconstruction can thus be seen not as a denial of truth, but as a denial of our ability to know truth (it makes an epistemological claim compared to nihilism's ontological claim).

Lyotard argues that, rather than relying on an objective truth or method to prove their claims, philosophers legitimize their truths by reference to a story about the world that can't be separated from the age and system the stories belong to—referred to by Lyotard as *meta-narratives*. He then goes on to define the *postmodern condition* as characterized by a rejection both of these meta-narratives and of the process of *legitimation* by meta-narratives. “In lieu of meta-narratives we have created new *language-games* in order to legitimize our claims which rely on changing relationships and mutable truths, none of which is privileged over the other to speak to ultimate truth.” This concept of the instability of truth and meaning leads in the direction of nihilism, though Lyotard stops short of embracing the latter.

Postmodern theorist Jean Baudrillard wrote briefly of nihilism from the postmodern viewpoint in *Simulacra and Simulation*. He stuck mainly to topics of interpretations of the real world over the simulations of which the real world is composed. The uses of meaning was an important subject in Baudrillard's discussion of nihilism:

The *apocalypse* is finished, today it is the precession of the neutral, of forms of the neutral and of indifference...all that remains, is the fascination for desertlike and indifferent forms, for the very operation of the system that annihilates us. Now, fascination (in contrast to seduction, which was attached to appearances, and to dialectical reason, which was attached to meaning) is a nihilistic passion par excellence, it is the passion proper to the mode of disappearance. We are fascinated by all forms of disappearance, of our disappearance. Melancholic and fascinated, such is our general situation in an era of involuntary transparency.

—Jean Baudrillard, *Simulacra and Simulation*, “On Nihilism” , trans. 1995

## 9.2.6 Transcendental nihilism / methodological naturalism

In *Nihil Unbound: Extinction and Enlightenment*, Ray Brassier maintains that philosophy has avoided the traumatic idea of *extinction*, instead attempting to find meaning in a world conditioned by the very idea of its own annihilation. Thus Brassier critiques both the phenomenological and hermeneutic strands of Continental philosophy as well as the vitality of thinkers like Gilles Deleuze, who work to ingrain meaning in the world and stave off the “threat” of nihilism. Instead, drawing on thinkers such as Alain Badiou, François Laruelle, Paul Churchland, and Thomas Metzinger, Brassier defends a view of the world as inherently devoid of meaning. That is, rather than avoiding nihilism, Brassier embraces it as the

truth of reality. Brassier concludes from his readings of Badiou and Laruelle that the universe is founded on the nothing,\*[56] but also that philosophy is the “organon of extinction,” that it is only because life is conditioned by its own extinction that there is thought at all.\*[57] Brassier then defends a radically anti-correlationist philosophy proposing that Thought is conjoined not with Being, but with Non-Being.

### 9.2.7 Nihilism and Buddhism

In **Buddhism**, the concept of the emptiness of conceptual structures bears some resemblance to nihilism. This was notably highlighted by Friedrich Nietzsche, though Buddhist scholars recently reported that this is could be due to inadequate translation at the time.

Being surrounded by those who are self-constrained, I do not posit anything that is seen, heard, sensed, or clung to and considered truth by others, as categorically true or false, since people have already seen this dart of “I know! I see! This is just so!” . I cling to nothing.

—The Buddha, Anguttara Nikaya XXIV

The Buddha argued that all structures, whether physical or conceptual are impermanent and empty of any consistent substance or essential nature. The doctrine of **Dependent Origination** emphasizes that forms originate due to dynamic conditions which as well are essentially empty in and of themselves. Another central Buddhist doctrine known as **anatta** is the concept that phenomenal existence is empty of a self or anything pertaining to a self.\*[58] According to **Nāgārjuna**, the 2nd century Buddhist philosopher, sentient beings are temporarily composed of the **five elements** and they have no being of their own, in the ultimate sense, a self doesn't exist.\*[59]

Genuine reality is empty of conceptual fabrications.

—Nāgārjuna, Mūlamadhyamakakārikā

In the Buddhist understanding, if existence exists, then it has to be infinite in quantity, since there can be no absolute quality that is in an of itself, to limit it.\*[60] According to early Buddhist commentaries, such as that of **Sarvastivada**,\*[61] nature works in a dialectical manner where all forms negate each other until the ongoing stream in a given system eventually dissolves into what is called as the possessionless state - a state that is devoid of any attribute.\*[62] In the context of human condition as a whole, it is the action that binds one to delusive conceptions which result in suffering and states of depression, since it is seen that in actuality, the material world lacks

the values we have given to it. Therefore, the possessionless state, namely, **nirvana** is the **summum bonum** of the Buddhist thought, which usually is regarded as a form of passive nihilism in the west.\*[63]

## 9.3 In culture

### 9.3.1 Dada

The term *Dada* was first used by **Richard Huelsenbeck** and **Tristan Tzara** in 1916.\*[64] The movement, which lasted from approximately 1916 to 1922, arose during **World War I**, an event that influenced the artists.\*[65] The Dada Movement began in the old town of Zürich, Switzerland – known as the “Niederdorf” or “Niederdörfli” – in the Café Voltaire.\*[66] The Dadaists claimed that Dada was not an art movement, but an **anti-art** movement, sometimes using found objects in a manner similar to **found poetry**. The “anti-art” drive is thought to have stemmed from a **post-war** emptiness. This tendency toward devaluation of art has led many to claim that Dada was an essentially nihilistic movement. Given that Dada created its own means for interpreting its products, it is difficult to classify alongside most other contemporary art expressions. Hence, due to its ambiguity, it is sometimes classified as a nihilistic *modus vivendi*.\*[65]

### 9.3.2 Literature

The term “nihilism” was actually popularized by **Ivan Turgenev** in his novel *Fathers and Sons*, whose hero, Bazarov, was a nihilist and recruited several followers to the philosophy. He found his nihilistic ways challenged upon falling in love.\*[67]

**Anton Chekhov** portrayed nihilism when writing *Three Sisters*. The phrase “what does it matter” or such variants is often spoken by several characters in response to events; the significance of some of these events suggests a subscription to nihilism by said characters as a type of coping strategy.

**Ayn Rand** vehemently denounced nihilism as an abdication of rationality and the pursuit of happiness which she regarded as life's moral purpose. As such, most villains are depicted as moral nihilists including Ellsworth Monckton Toohey in *The Fountainhead* who is a self-aware nihilist and the corrupt government in *Atlas Shrugged* who are unconsciously driven by nihilism which has taken root in the books depiction of American society with the fictional slang phrase “Who is John Galt?” being used as a defeatist way of saying “Who knows?” or “What does it matter?” by characters in the book who have essentially given up on life.

The philosophical ideas of the French author, the **Marquis de Sade**, are often noted as early examples of nihilistic principles.

In “Black Popular Culture” , discusses about nihilism as not being new to black America (Dent, 1992, p. 40). Finding value in one's life is essential to overcome the feeling of hopelessness (Dent, 1992, p. 40).

### 9.3.3 Film

Three of the antagonists in the 1998 movie *The Big Lebowski* are explicitly described as “nihilists,” but are not shown exhibiting any explicitly nihilistic traits during the film. Regarding the nihilists, the character Walter Sobchak comments “Nihilists! Fuck me. I mean, say what you want about the tenets of National Socialism, Dude, at least it's an ethos.” The 1999 film *The Matrix* portrays the character Thomas A. Anderson with a hollowed out copy of Baudrillard's treatise, *Simulacra and Simulation*, in which he stores contraband data files under the chapter “On Nihilism.” The main antagonist Agent Smith is also depicted frequently as a nihilist, with him ranting about how all of peace, justice and love were meaningless in *The Matrix Revolutions*.<sup>[68]</sup> The 1999 film *Fight Club* also features concepts relating to Nihilism by exploring the contrasts between the artificial values imposed by consumerism in relation to the more meaningful pursuit of spiritual happiness.

In keeping with his comic book depiction, The Joker is portrayed as a nihilist in *The Dark Knight*, describing himself as “an Agent of Chaos” and at one point burning a gigantic pile of money stating that crime is “not about money, it's about sending a message: everything burns.” Alfred Pennyworth states, regarding the Joker, “Some men aren't looking for anything logical, like money—they can't be bought, bullied, reasoned or negotiated with—some men just want to watch the world burn.”<sup>[69]</sup>

### 9.4 See also

- Absurdism
- Acosmism
- Agnosticism
- Apatheism
- Apathy
- Amoralism
- Anarchism
- Anatta
- Atheism
- Anti-art and Anti-anti-art
- Cosmicism
- Cynicism (philosophy)
- Egoism
- Dao De Jing
- Dysteleology
- Eliminative materialism
- Existentialism
- Hedonism
- Misanthropy
- Misotheism
- Nihilist movement
- Nirvana
- Paradox of nihilism
- Pessimism
- Postmodernism
- Post-structuralism
- Radical skepticism
- Solipsism
- Therapeutic nihilism
- Trivialism

## 9.5 Notes

- [1] Alan Pratt defines existential nihilism as “the notion that life has no intrinsic meaning or value, and it is, no doubt, the most commonly used and understood sense of the word today.” *Internet Encyclopaedia of Philosophy*
- [2] Bazarov, the protagonist in the classic work *Fathers and Sons* written in the early 1860s by Ivan Turgenev, is quoted as saying nihilism is “just cursing” , cited in *Encyclopaedia of Philosophy* (Macmillan, 1967) Vol. 5, “Nihilism” , 514 ff. This source states as follows: “On the one hand, the term is widely used to denote the doctrine that moral norms or standards cannot be justified by rational argument. On the other hand, it is widely used to denote a mood of despair over the emptiness or triviality of human existence. This double meaning appears to derive from the fact that the term was often employed in the nineteenth century by the religiously oriented as a club against atheists, atheists being regarded as *ipso facto* nihilists in both senses. The atheist, it was held [by the religiously oriented], would not feel bound by moral norms; consequently, he would tend to be callous or selfish, even criminal” (at p. 515).
- [3] Phillips, Robert (1999). “Deconstructing the Mass” . *Latin Mass Magazine* (Winter). For deconstructionists, not only is there no truth to know, there is no self to know it and so there is no soul to save or lose.” and “In following the Enlightenment to its logical end, deconstruction reaches nihilism. The meaning of human life is reduced to whatever happens to interest us at the moment...



- [4] Capaldi, Nicholas (1995-11-01). "Scientism, deconstruction, and nihilism". *Argumentation*. **9** (4): 563–575. doi:10.1007/BF00737778. ISSN 0920-427X.
- [5] For some examples of the view that postmodernity is a nihilistic epoch see Toynbee, Arnold (1963) *A Study of History* vols. VIII and IX; Mills, C. Wright (1959) *The Sociological Imagination*; Bell, Daniel (1976) *The Cultural Contradictions of Capitalism*; and Baudrillard, Jean (1993) "Game with Vestiges" in *Baudrillard Live*, ed. Mike Gane and (1994) "On Nihilism" in *Simulacra and Simulation*, trans. Sheila Faria Glasser. For examples of the view that postmodernism is a nihilistic mode of thought, see Rose, Gillian (1984) *Dialectic of Nihilism*; Carr, Karen L. (1988) *The Banalisation of Nihilism*; and Pope John-Paul II (1995), *Evangelium vitae: Il valore e l'inviolabilità della vita umana*. Milan: Paoline Editoriale Libri.", all cited in Woodward, Ashley: *Nihilism and the Postmodern in Vat-timo's Nietzsche*, ISSN 1393-614X *Minerva - An Internet Journal of Philosophy*, Vol. 6, 2002, fn 1.
- [6] For example, Leffel, Jim; Dennis McCallum. "The Post-modern Challenge: Facing the Spirit of the Age". Christian Research Institute. ...the nihilism and loneliness of postmodern culture...
- [7] www.askoxford.com. "AskOxford: nihilism".
- [8] "nihilism". *The American Heritage Medical Dictionary*. Houghton Mifflin Harcourt. 2008. p. 363. ISBN 0-618-94725-6.
- [9] "Solipsism and the Problem of Other Minds - Internet Encyclopedia of Philosophy".
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- [11] Cooper, Neil. "Moral Nihilism". *Proceedings of the Aristotelian Society*. **74** (1973-1974): 75–90. JSTOR 4544850.
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- [13] Online Etymology Dictionary s.v. "nihilism"
- [14] George di Giovanni, *Friedrich Heinrich Jacobi*, The Stanford Encyclopaedia of Philosophy (Fall 2008 Edition), Edward N. Zalta (ed.). [Stanford.edu](http://Stanford.edu)
- [15] Davis, Bret W. - "Zen After Zarathustra: The Problem of the Will in the Confrontation Between Nietzsche and Buddhism" *Journal of Nietzsche Studies* Issue 28 (2004):89-138 (here 107).
- [16] Douglas Harper, "Nihilism", in: *Online Etymology Dictionary*, retrieved at December 2, 2009.
- [17] Dreyfus, Hubert. Kierkegaard on the Internet: Anonymity vs. Commitment in the Present Age. [Berkeley.edu](http://Berkeley.edu)
- [18] Hannay, Alastair. *Kierkegaard*, p. 289.
- [19] Cotkin, George. *Existential America*, p. 59.
- [20] Kierkegaard, Søren. *The Present Age*, translated by Alexander Dru with Foreword by Walter Kaufmann
- [21] Kierkegaard, Søren. *The Sickness Unto Death*
- [22] Barnett, Christopher. *Kierkegaard, pietism and holiness*, p. 156.
- [23] Wrathall, Mark et al. *Heidegger, Authenticity, and Modernity*, p. 107.
- [24] Carr, K., *The Banalisation of Nihilism*, State University of New York Press, 1992, p. 25.
- [25] F. Nietzsche, KSA 12:6 [25]
- [26] Steven Michels, "Nietzsche, Nihilism, and the Virtue of Nature", *Dogma*, 2004, [Free.fr](http://Free.fr)
- [27] F. Nietzsche, KSA 12:10 [142]
- [28] F. Nietzsche, KSA 13:14 [22]
- [29] Carr, K., *The Banalisation of Nihilism*, State University of New York University Press, 1992 p. 38.
- [30] F. Nietzsche, KSA 12:5 [71]
- [31] F. Nietzsche, KSA 12:2 [200]
- [32] F. Nietzsche, KSA 12:2 [127]
- [33] Carr, K., *The Banalisation of Nihilism* (1992), pp. 41–42.
- [34] Rosen, Stanley. *Nihilism: A Philosophical Essay*. New Haven: Yale University Press. 1969. p. xiii.
- [35] F. Nietzsche, *The Gay Science*: 125.
- [36] This "will to nothingness" is still a willing of some sort, because it is exactly as a pessimist that Schopenhauer clings to life. See F. Nietzsche, *On the Genealogy of Morals*, III:7.
- [37] F. Nietzsche, KSA 12:7 [8]
- [38] Friedrich Nietzsche, *Complete Works* Vol. 13.
- [39] F. Nietzsche, KSA 12:9 [35]
- [40] K. Carr, *The Banalisation of Nihilism*, State University of New York Press, 1992, pp. 43–50.
- [41] J. Doomen, "Consistent Nihilism", *Journal of Mind and Behavior* 33 (1/2) (2012): pp. 103–117.
- [42] "Heideggers, Aus-einander-setzung' mit Nietzsches hat mannigfache Resonanz gefunden. Das Verhältnis der beiden Philosophen zueinander ist dabei von unterschiedlichen Positionen aus diskutiert worden. Inzwischen ist es nicht mehr ungewöhnlich, daß Heidegger, entgegen seinem Anspruch auf, Verwindung' der Metaphysik und des ihr zugehörigen Nihilismus, in jenen Nihilismus zurückgestellt wird, als dessen Vollender er Nietzsche angesehen hat." Wolfgang Müller-Lauter, *Heidegger und Nietzsche. Nietzsche-Interpretationen III*, Berlin-New York 2000, p. 303.
- [43] Cf. both by Heidegger: Vol. I, *Nietzsche I* (1936-39). Translated as *Nietzsche I: The Will to Power as Art* by David F. Krell (New York: Harper & Row, 1979); Vol. II, *Nietzsche II* (1939-46). Translated as "The Eternal Recurrence of the Same" by David F. Krell in *Nietzsche II: The Eternal Recurrence of the Same* (New York, Harper & Row, 1984).

- [44] “Indem Heidegger das von Nietzsche Ungesagte im Hinblick auf die Seinsfrage zur Sprache zu bringen sucht, wird das von Nietzsche Gesagte in ein diesem selber fremdes Licht gerückt.”, Müller-Lauter, *Heidegger und Nietzsche*, p. 267.
- [45] Original German: *Die seinsgeschichtliche Bestimmung des Nihilismus*. Found in the second volume of his lectures: Vol. II, *Nietzsche II* (1939-46). Translated as “The Eternal Recurrence of the Same” by David F. Krell in *Nietzsche II: The Eternal Recurrence of the Same* (New York, Harper & Row, 1984).
- [46] “Heidegger geht davon aus, daß Nietzsche den Nihilismus als Entwertung der bisherigen obersten Werte versteht; seine Überwindung soll durch die Umwertung der Werte erfolgen. Das Prinzip der Umwertung wie auch jeder früheren Wertsetzung ist der Wille zur Macht.”, Müller-Lauter, *Heidegger und Nietzsche*, p. 268.
- [47] “What remains unquestioned and forgotten in metaphysics is being; and hence, it is nihilistic.”, UTM.edu, visited on November 24, 2009.
- [48] Müller-Lauter, *Heidegger und Nietzsche*, p. 268.
- [49] Müller-Lauter, *Heidegger und Nietzsche*, pp. 272-275.
- [50] Müller-Lauter, *Heidegger und Nietzsche*, pp. 301-303.
- [51] “Er (Vattimo) konstatiert, in vielen europäischen Philosophien eine Hin- und Herbewegung zwischen Heidegger und Nietzsche”. Dabei denkt er, wie seine späteren Ausführungen zeigen, z.B. an Deleuze, Foucault und Derrida auf französischer Seite, an Cacciari, Severino und an sich selbst auf italienischer Seite.”, Müller-Lauter, *Heidegger und Nietzsche*, p. 302.
- [52] Müller-Lauter, *Heidegger und Nietzsche*, pp. 303-304.
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- [56] Ray Brassier, *Nihil Unbound*, 148-149.
- [57] Ray Brassier, *Nihil Unbound*, 223-226, 234-238.
- [58] “Maha-suññata Sutta: The Greater Discourse on Emptiness”.
- [59] “Chap 3: The Object of Negation”.
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- [65] Tzara, Tristan (December 2005). Trans/ed. Mary Ann Caws “*Approximate Man*” & *Other Writings*. Black Widow Press, p. 3.
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- [67] Camus, Albert (1951) *The Rebel*. New York: Vintage Books. Page 154.
- [68] **Agent Smith:** Why, Mr. Anderson? Why, why? Why do you do it? Why? Why get up? Do you believe you're fighting for something, for more than your survival? Can you tell me what it is, do you even know? Is it freedom or truth, perhaps peace - could it be for love? Illusions, Mr. Anderson, vagaries of perception. Temporary constructs of a feeble human intellect trying desperately to justify an existence that is without meaning or purpose! And all of them as artificial as the Matrix itself. Although, only a human mind could invent something as insipid as love. You must be able to see it, Mr. Anderson, you must know it by now! You can't win, it's pointless to keep fighting! Why, Mr. Anderson, why?! why do you persist?! / **Neo:** Because I choose to.
- [69] Sonny Bunch (July 18, 2008). “MOVIES: Gotham City's war on terror”. *The Washington Times*.

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## 9.7 External links

- Nihilist Abyss
- Friedrich Nietzsche, *Thus spake Zarathustra*, translated by Thomas Common
- Internet Encyclopedia of Philosophy: *Nihilism*
- “Fathers and Sons” by Ivan Turgenev
- Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy: *Moral Skepticism*, “Skeptical Hypotheses”
- "Nihilism". *New International Encyclopedia*. 1905.
- Radiolab - In The Dust Of This Planet, Radiolab podcast on nihilism and popular culture



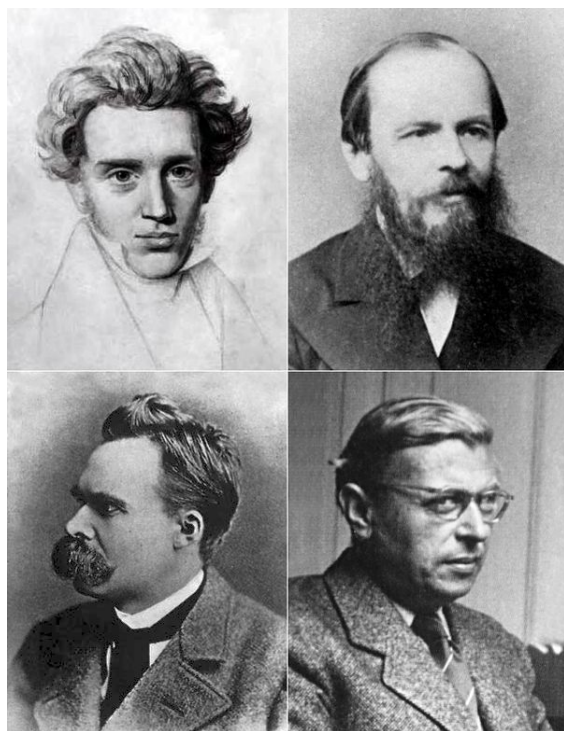
## Chapter 10

# Existentialism

“Existential” redirects here. For the logical sense of the term, see [Existential quantification](#). For other uses, see [Existence](#) (disambiguation).

Not to be confused with [Essentialism](#).

**Existentialism** (/ˈɛɡzɪˈstɛnʃəlɪzəm/)<sup>[1]</sup> is a term ap-



*Clockwise from top left: Kierkegaard, Dostoyevsky, Sartre, Nietzsche*

plied to the work of certain late-19th- and 20th-century European philosophers who, despite profound doctrinal differences,<sup>[2]</sup><sup>[3]</sup><sup>[4]</sup> shared the belief that philosophical thinking begins with the human subject—not merely the thinking subject, but the acting, feeling, living human individual.<sup>[5]</sup> While the predominant value of existentialist thought is commonly acknowledged to be freedom, its primary virtue is [authenticity](#).<sup>[6]</sup> In the view of the existentialist, the individual's starting point is characterized by what has been called “the existential attitude” , or a sense of disorientation, confusion, or dread in the face of an apparently meaningless or [absurd](#) world.<sup>[7]</sup> Many existentialists have also regarded traditional sys-

tematic or academic philosophies, in both style and content, as too abstract and remote from concrete human experience.<sup>[8]</sup><sup>[9]</sup>

Søren Kierkegaard is generally considered to have been the first existentialist philosopher,<sup>[2]</sup><sup>[10]</sup><sup>[11]</sup> though he did not use the term existentialism.<sup>[12]</sup> He proposed that each individual—not society or religion—is solely responsible for giving [meaning](#) to life and living it passionately and sincerely, or “[authentically](#)” .<sup>[13]</sup><sup>[14]</sup> Existentialism became popular in the years following [World War II](#), and strongly influenced many disciplines besides [philosophy](#), including theology, drama, art, literature, and psychology.<sup>[15]</sup>

### 10.1 Definitional issues and background

The term is often seen as a historical convenience as it was first applied to many philosophers in hindsight, long after they had died. In fact, while existentialism is generally considered to have originated with Kierkegaard, the first prominent existentialist philosopher to adopt the term as a self-description was [Jean-Paul Sartre](#). Sartre posits the idea that “what all existentialists have in common is the fundamental doctrine that [existence precedes essence](#)”, as scholar [Frederick Copleston](#) explains.<sup>[16]</sup> According to philosopher [Steven Crowell](#), defining existentialism has been relatively difficult, and he argues that it is better [understood](#) as a general approach used to reject certain systematic philosophies rather than as a systematic philosophy itself.<sup>[2]</sup> Sartre himself, in a lecture delivered in 1945, described existentialism as “the attempt to draw all the consequences from a position of consistent atheism” .<sup>[17]</sup>

Although many outside [Scandinavia](#) consider the term existentialism to have originated from Kierkegaard himself, it is more likely that Kierkegaard adopted this term (or at least the term “existential” as a description of his philosophy) from the Norwegian poet and literary critic [Johan Sebastian Cammermeyer Welhaven](#).<sup>[18]</sup> This assertion comes from two sources. The Norwegian philosopher Erik Lundestad refers to the Danish philosopher Fredrik

Christian Sibbern. Sibbern is supposed to have had two conversations in 1841, the first with Welhaven and the second with Kierkegaard. It is in the first conversation that it is believed that Welhaven came up with “a word that he said covered a certain thinking, which had a close and positive attitude to life, a relationship he described as existential” .\*[19] This was then brought to Kierkegaard by Sibbern.

The second claim comes from the Norwegian historian **Rune Slagstad**, who claims to prove that Kierkegaard himself said the term “existential” was borrowed from the poet. He strongly believes that it was Kierkegaard himself who said that “**Hegelians** do not study philosophy 'existentially'; to use a phrase by Welhaven from one time when I spoke with him about philosophy” .\*[20] On the other hand, the Norwegian historian **Anne-Lise Seip** is critical of Slagstad, and believes the statement in fact stems from the Norwegian literary historian **Cathrinus Bang**.\*[21]

## 10.2 Concepts

### 10.2.1 Existence precedes essence

Main article: **Existence precedes essence**

Sartre claimed that a central proposition of Existentialism is that *existence precedes essence*, which means that the most important consideration for individuals is that they are individuals—independently acting and responsible, conscious beings (“existence”)—rather than what labels, roles, stereotypes, definitions, or other preconceived categories the individuals fit (“essence”). The actual life of the individuals is what constitutes what could be called their “true essence” instead of there being an arbitrarily attributed essence others use to define them. Thus, human beings, through their own **consciousness**, create their own values and determine a meaning to their life.\*[22] Although it was Sartre who explicitly coined the phrase, similar notions can be found in the thought of existentialist philosophers such as **Heidegger**, and **Kierkegaard**:

“The subjective *thinker's form*, the form of his communication, is his *style*. His form must be just as manifold as are the opposites that he holds together. The systematic *eins, zwei, drei* is an abstract form that also must inevitably run into trouble whenever it is to be applied to the concrete. To the same degree as the subjective thinker is concrete, to the same degree his form must also be concretely dialectical. But just as he himself is not a poet, not an ethicist, not a dialectician, so also his form is none of these directly. His form must first and last be related to existence, and in this regard he must have at his disposal the poetic, the ethical, the

dialectical, the religious. Subordinate character, setting, etc., which belong to the well balanced character of the esthetic production, are in themselves breadth; the subjective thinker has only one setting—existence—and has nothing to do with localities and such things. The setting is not the fairyland of the imagination, where poetry produces consummation, nor is the setting laid in England, and historical accuracy is not a concern. The setting is inwardness in existing as a human being; the concretion is the relation of the existence-categories to one another. Historical accuracy and historical actuality are breadth.” Søren Kierkegaard (Concluding Postscript, Hong pp. 357–58)

Some interpret the imperative to define oneself as meaning that anyone can wish to be anything. However, an existentialist philosopher would say such a wish constitutes an inauthentic existence - what Sartre would call 'bad faith'. Instead, the phrase should be taken to say that people are (1) defined only insofar as they act and (2) that they are responsible for their actions. For example, someone who acts cruelly towards other people is, by that act, defined as a cruel person. Furthermore, by this action of cruelty, such persons are themselves responsible for their new identity (cruel persons). This is as opposed to their genes, or *human nature*, bearing the blame.

As Sartre writes in his work *Existentialism is a Humanism*: “... man first of all exists, encounters himself, surges up in the world—and defines himself afterwards” . Of course, the more positive, therapeutic aspect of this is also implied: A person can choose to act in a different way, and to be a good person instead of a cruel person. Here it is also clear that since humans can choose to be either cruel or good, they are, in fact, neither of these things essentially.\*[23]

Sartre's definition of existentialism was based on Heidegger's magnum opus “Being and Time”. In a set of letters, Heidegger implies that Sartre misunderstood him for his own purposes of subjectivism, and that he did not mean that actions take precedence over being so long as those actions were not reflected upon. This way of living, Heidegger called “average everydayness” .

### 10.2.2 The Absurd

Main article: **Absurdism**

The notion of the **Absurd** contains the idea that there is no meaning in the world beyond what meaning we give it. This meaninglessness also encompasses the amorality or “unfairness” of the world. This contrasts with the notion that “bad things don't happen to good people”; to the world, metaphorically speaking, there is no such thing as a good person or a bad person; what happens happens,

and it may just as well happen to a “good” person as to a “bad” person.\*[24]

Because of the world's absurdity, at any point in time, anything can happen to anyone, and a tragic event could plummet someone into direct confrontation with the Absurd. The notion of the Absurd has been prominent in literature throughout history. Many of the literary works of Søren Kierkegaard, Samuel Beckett, Franz Kafka, Fyodor Dostoyevsky, Eugène Ionesco, Miguel de Unamuno, Luigi Pirandello,\*[25]\*[26]\*[27]\*[28] Jean-Paul Sartre, Joseph Heller and Albert Camus contain descriptions of people who encounter the absurdity of the world.

It is in relation to the concept of the devastating awareness of meaninglessness that Albert Camus claimed that “there is only one truly serious philosophical problem, and that is suicide” in his *The Myth of Sisyphus*. Although “prescriptions” against the possibly deleterious consequences of these kinds of encounters vary, from Kierkegaard's religious “stage” to Camus' insistence on persevering in spite of absurdity, the concern with helping people avoid living their lives in ways that put them in the perpetual danger of having everything meaningful break down is common to most existentialist philosophers. The possibility of having everything meaningful break down poses a threat of *quietism*, which is inherently against the existentialist philosophy.\*[29] It has been said that the possibility of *suicide* makes all humans existentialists.\*[30]

### 10.2.3 Facticity

Main article: *Facticity*

Facticity is a concept defined by Sartre in *Being and Nothingness* as the *in-itself*, which delineates for humans the modalities of being and not being. This can be more easily understood when considering facticity in relation to the temporal dimension of our past: one's past is what one is, in the sense that it co-constitutes oneself. However, to say that one is only one's past would be to ignore a significant part of reality (the present and the future), while saying that one's past is only what one was, would entirely detach it from oneself now. A denial of one's own concrete past constitutes an inauthentic lifestyle, and the same goes for all other kinds of facticity (having a human body—e.g. one that doesn't allow a person to run faster than the speed of sound—identity, values, etc.)\*[31]

Facticity is both a limitation and a condition of freedom. It is a limitation in that a large part of one's facticity consists of things one couldn't have chosen (birthplace, etc.), but a condition of freedom in the sense that one's values most likely depend on it. However, even though one's facticity is “set in stone” (as being past, for instance), it cannot determine a person: The value ascribed to one's facticity is still ascribed to it freely by that person. As an example, consider two men, one of whom has

no memory of his past and the other who remembers everything. They both have committed many crimes, but the first man, knowing nothing about this, leads a rather normal life while the second man, feeling trapped by his own past, continues a life of crime, blaming his own past for “trapping” him in this life. There is nothing essential about his committing crimes, but he ascribes this meaning to his past.

However, to disregard one's facticity when, in the continual process of self-making, one projects oneself into the future, that would be to put oneself in denial of oneself, and thus would be inauthentic. In other words, the origin of one's projection must still be one's facticity, though in the mode of not being it (essentially). Another aspect of facticity is that it entails *angst*, both in the sense that freedom “produces” angst when limited by facticity, and in the sense that the lack of the possibility of having facticity to “step in” for one to take responsibility for something one has done, also produces angst.

Another aspect of existential freedom is that one can change one's values. Thus, one is responsible for one's values, regardless of society's values. The focus on *freedom* in existentialism is related to the limits of the responsibility one bears, as a result of one's freedom: the relationship between freedom and responsibility is one of interdependency, and a clarification of freedom also clarifies that for which one is responsible.\*[32]\*[33]

### 10.2.4 Authenticity

Main article: *Authenticity*

Many noted existentialist writers consider the theme of authentic existence important. Authentic existence involves the idea that one has to “create oneself” and then live in accordance with this self. What is meant by *authenticity* is that in acting, one should act as oneself, not as “one's acts” or as “one's genes” or any other essence requires. The authentic act is one that is in accordance with one's freedom. Of course, as a condition of freedom is facticity, this includes one's facticity, but not to the degree that this facticity can in any way determine one's choices (in the sense that one could then blame one's background for making the choice one made). The role of facticity in relation to authenticity involves letting one's actual values come into play when one makes a choice (instead of, like Kierkegaard's Aesthete, “choosing” randomly), so that one also takes responsibility for the act instead of choosing either-or without allowing the options to have different values.\*[34]

In contrast to this, the inauthentic is the denial to live in accordance with one's freedom. This can take many forms, from pretending choices are meaningless or random, through convincing oneself that some form of *determinism* is true, to a sort of “mimicry” where one acts as “one should.” How “one should” act is often de-

terminated by an image one has of how one such as oneself (say, a bank manager, lion tamer, prostitute, etc.) acts. This image usually corresponds to some sort of social norm, but this does not mean that all acting in accordance with social norms is inauthentic: The main point is the attitude one takes to one's own freedom and responsibility, and the extent to which one acts in accordance with this freedom.

### 10.2.5 The Other and the Look

Main article: [Other](#)

The Other (when written with a capital “O”) is a concept more properly belonging to [phenomenology](#) and its account of [intersubjectivity](#). However, the concept has seen widespread use in existentialist writings, and the conclusions drawn from it differ slightly from the phenomenological accounts. The experience of the Other is the experience of another free subject who inhabits the same world as a person does. In its most basic form, it is this experience of the Other that constitutes intersubjectivity and objectivity. To clarify, when one experiences someone else, and this Other person experiences the world (the same world that a person experiences)—only from “over there”—the world itself is constituted as objective in that it is something that is “there” as identical for both of the subjects; a person experiences the other person as experiencing the same things. This experience of the Other's look is what is termed the Look (sometimes the [Gaze](#)).<sup>[35]</sup>

While this experience, in its basic phenomenological sense, constitutes the world as objective, and oneself as objectively existing subjectivity (one experiences oneself as seen in the Other's Look in precisely the same way that one experiences the Other as seen by him, as subjectivity), in existentialism, it also acts as a kind of limitation of freedom. This is because the Look tends to objectify what it sees. As such, when one experiences oneself in the Look, one doesn't experience oneself as nothing (no thing), but as something. Sartre's own example of a man peeping at someone through a keyhole can help clarify this: at first, this man is entirely caught up in the situation he is in; he is in a pre-reflexive state where his entire consciousness is directed at what goes on in the room. Suddenly, he hears a creaking floorboard behind him, and he becomes aware of himself as seen by the Other. He is thus filled with shame for he perceives himself as he would perceive someone else doing what he was doing, as a [Peeping Tom](#). The Look is then co-constitutive of one's facticity.

Another characteristic feature of the Look is that no Other really needs to have been there: It is quite possible that the creaking floorboard was nothing but the movement of an old house; the Look isn't some kind of mystical telepathic experience of the actual way the other

sees one (there may also have been someone there, but he could have not noticed that the person was there). It is only one's perception of the way another might perceive him.

### 10.2.6 Angst and dread

Main article: [Angst](#)

See also: [Living educational theory](#)

“Existential [angst](#)”, sometimes called existential dread, anxiety, or [anguish](#), is a term that is common to many existentialist thinkers. It is generally held to be a negative feeling arising from the experience of human freedom and responsibility. The archetypical example is the experience one has when standing on a cliff where one not only fears falling off it, but also dreads the possibility of throwing oneself off. In this experience that “nothing is holding me back”, one senses the lack of anything that predetermines one to either throw oneself off or to stand still, and one experiences one's own freedom.<sup>[24]</sup>

It can also be seen in relation to the previous point how angst is before nothing, and this is what sets it apart from fear that has an object. While in the case of fear, one can take definitive measures to remove the object of fear, in the case of angst, no such “constructive” measures are possible. The use of the word “nothing” in this context relates both to the inherent insecurity about the consequences of one's actions, and to the fact that, in experiencing freedom as angst, one also realizes that one is fully responsible for these consequences. There is nothing in people (genetically, for instance) that acts in their stead—that they can blame if something goes wrong. Therefore, not every choice is perceived as having dreadful possible consequences (and, it can be claimed, human lives would be unbearable if every choice facilitated dread). However, this doesn't change the fact that freedom remains a condition of every action.

### 10.2.7 Despair

Main article: [Despair](#)

See also: [Existential crisis](#)

Despair, in existentialism, is generally defined as a loss of hope.<sup>[36]</sup> More specifically, it is a loss of hope in reaction to a breakdown in one or more of the defining qualities of one's self or identity. If a person is invested in being a particular thing, such as a bus driver or an upstanding citizen, and then finds his being-thing compromised, he would normally be found in state of despair—a hopeless state. For example, a singer who loses the ability to sing may despair if she has nothing else to fall back on—nothing to rely on for her identity. She finds herself unable to be what defined her being.



What sets the existentialist notion of despair apart from the conventional definition is that existentialist despair is a state one is in even when he isn't overtly in despair. So long as a person's identity depends on qualities that can crumble, he is in perpetual despair—and as there is, in Sartrean terms, no human essence found in conventional reality on which to constitute the individual's sense of identity, despair is a universal human condition. As Kierkegaard defines it in *Either/Or*: “Let each one learn what he can; both of us can learn that a person's unhappiness never lies in his lack of control over external conditions, since this would only make him completely unhappy.” \* [37] In *Works of Love*, he said:

When the God-forsaken worldliness of earthly life shuts itself in complacency, the confined air develops poison, the moment gets stuck and stands still, the prospect is lost, a need is felt for a refreshing, enlivening breeze to cleanse the air and dispel the poisonous vapors lest we suffocate in worldliness. ... Lovingly to hope all things is the opposite of despairingly to hope **nothing** at all. Love hopes all things—yet is never put to shame. To relate oneself expectantly to the possibility of the good is to hope. To relate oneself expectantly to the possibility of evil is to fear. By the decision to choose hope one decides infinitely more than it seems, because it is an eternal decision. pp. 246–50

### 10.3 Opposition to positivism and rationalism

See also: **Positivism** and **Rationalism**

Existentialists oppose definitions of human beings as primarily rational, and, therefore, oppose **positivism** and **rationalism**. Existentialism asserts that people actually make decisions based on subjective meaning rather than pure rationality. The rejection of reason as the source of meaning is a common theme of existentialist thought, as is the focus on the feelings of **anxiety** and **dread** that we feel in the face of our own radical **freedom** and our awareness of death. Kierkegaard advocated rationality as means to interact with the objective world (e.g. in the natural sciences), but when it comes to existential problems, reason is insufficient: “Human reason has boundaries.” \* [38]

Like Kierkegaard, Sartre saw problems with rationality, calling it a form of “bad faith”, an attempt by the self to impose structure on a world of phenomena —“the Other”—that is fundamentally irrational and random. According to Sartre, rationality and other forms of bad faith hinder people from finding meaning in free-

dom. To try to suppress their feelings of anxiety and dread, people confine themselves within everyday experience, Sartre asserts, thereby relinquishing their freedom and acquiescing to being possessed in one form or another by “the Look” of “the Other” (i.e., possessed by another person—or at least one's idea of that other person).

## 10.4 Religion

See also: **Atheistic existentialism**, **Christian existentialism**, and **Jewish existentialism**

An existentialist reading of the **Bible** would demand that the reader recognize that he is an existing subject studying the words more as a recollection of events. This is in contrast to looking at a collection of “truths” that are outside and unrelated to the reader, but may develop a sense of reality/God. Such a reader is not obligated to follow the commandments as if an external agent is forcing them upon him, but as though they are inside him and guiding him from inside. This is the task Kierkegaard takes up when he asks: “Who has the more difficult task: the teacher who lectures on earnest things a meteor's distance from everyday life - or the learner who should put it to use?” \* [39]

## 10.5 Nihilism

See also: **Existential nihilism**

Although **nihilism** and existentialism are distinct philosophies, they are often confused with one another. A primary cause of confusion is that **Friedrich Nietzsche** is an important philosopher in both fields, but also the existentialist insistence on the inherent meaninglessness of the world. Existentialist philosophers often stress the importance of **Angst** as signifying the absolute lack of any objective ground for action, a move that is often reduced to a **moral** or an **existential nihilism**. A pervasive theme in the works of existentialist philosophy, however, is to persist through encounters with the absurd, as seen in **Camus' The Myth of Sisyphus** ( “One must imagine Sisyphus happy” ), \* [40] and it is only very rarely that existentialist philosophers dismiss morality or one's self-created meaning: Kierkegaard regained a sort of morality in the religious (although he wouldn't himself agree that it was ethical; the religious suspends the ethical), and Sartre's final words in *Being and Nothingness* are “All these questions, which refer us to a pure and not an accessory (or impure) reflection, can find their reply only on the ethical plane. We shall devote to them a future work.” \* [41]

## 10.6 Etymology

The term “existentialism” was coined by the French Catholic philosopher Gabriel Marcel in the mid-1940s. [42] [43] [44] At first, when Marcel applied the term to him at a colloquium in 1945, Jean-Paul Sartre rejected it. [45] Sartre subsequently changed his mind and, on October 29, 1945, publicly adopted the existentialist label in a lecture to the *Club Maintenant* in Paris. The lecture was published as *L'existentialisme est un humanisme* (Existentialism is a Humanism), a short book that did much to popularize existentialist thought. [46] Marcel later came to reject the label himself in favour of the term Neo-Socratic, in honor of Kierkegaard's essay “On The Concept of Irony”.

Some scholars argue that the term should be used only to refer to the cultural movement in Europe in the 1940s and 1950s associated with the works of the philosophers Jean-Paul Sartre, Simone de Beauvoir, Maurice Merleau-Ponty, and Albert Camus. [2] Other scholars extend the term to Kierkegaard, and yet others extend it as far back as Socrates. [47] However, the term is often identified with the philosophical views of Jean-Paul Sartre. [2]

## 10.7 History

### 10.7.1 19th century

#### Kierkegaard and Nietzsche

Main article: Søren Kierkegaard and Friedrich Nietzsche

Søren Kierkegaard and Friedrich Nietzsche were two of the first philosophers considered fundamental to the existentialist movement, though neither used the term “existentialism” and it is unclear whether they would have supported the existentialism of the 20th century. They focused on subjective human experience rather than the objective truths of mathematics and science, which they believed were too detached or observational to truly get at the human experience. Like Pascal, they were interested in people's quiet struggle with the apparent meaninglessness of life and the use of diversion to escape from boredom. Unlike Pascal, Kierkegaard and Nietzsche also considered the role of making free choices, particularly regarding fundamental values and beliefs, and how such choices change the nature and identity of the chooser. [48] Kierkegaard's knight of faith and Nietzsche's Übermensch are representative of people who exhibit Freedom, in that they define the nature of their own existence. Nietzsche's idealized individual invents his own values and creates the very terms they excel under. By contrast, Kierkegaard, opposed to the level of abstraction in Hegel, and not nearly as hostile (actually welcoming) to Christianity as Nietzsche, argues through a

pseudonym that the objective certainty of religious truths (specifically Christian) is not only impossible, but even founded on logical paradoxes. Yet he continues to imply that a leap of faith is a possible means for an individual to reach a higher stage of existence that transcends and contains both an aesthetic and ethical value of life. Kierkegaard and Nietzsche were also precursors to other intellectual movements, including postmodernism, and various strands of psychology. However, Kierkegaard believed that individuals should live in accordance with their thinking.

#### Dostoyevsky

The first important literary author also important to existentialism was the Russian Fyodor Dostoyevsky. [49] Dostoyevsky's *Notes from Underground* portrays a man unable to fit into society and unhappy with the identities he creates for himself. Jean-Paul Sartre, in his book on existentialism *Existentialism is a Humanism*, quoted Dostoyevsky's *The Brothers Karamazov* as an example of existential crisis. Sartre attributes Ivan Karamazov's claim, “If God did not exist, everything would be permitted” [50] to Dostoyevsky himself, though this quote does not appear in the novel. [51] However, a similar sentiment is explicitly stated when Alyosha visits Dimitri in prison. Dimitri mentions his conversations with Rakitin in which the idea that “Then, if He doesn't exist, man is king of the earth, of the universe” allowing the inference contained in Sartre's attribution to remain a valid idea contested within the novel. [52] Other Dostoyevsky novels covered issues raised in existentialist philosophy while presenting story lines divergent from secular existentialism: for example, in *Crime and Punishment*, the protagonist Raskolnikov experiences an existential crisis and then moves toward a Christian Orthodox worldview similar to that advocated by Dostoyevsky himself.

### 10.7.2 Early 20th century

See also: Martin Heidegger

In the first decades of the 20th century, a number of philosophers and writers explored existentialist ideas. The Spanish philosopher Miguel de Unamuno y Jugo, in his 1913 book *The Tragic Sense of Life in Men and Nations*, emphasized the life of “flesh and bone” as opposed to that of abstract rationalism. Unamuno rejected systematic philosophy in favor of the individual's quest for faith. He retained a sense of the tragic, even absurd nature of the quest, symbolized by his enduring interest in Cervantes' fictional character Don Quixote. A novelist, poet and dramatist as well as philosophy professor at the University of Salamanca, Unamuno wrote a short story about a priest's crisis of faith, *Saint Manuel the Good, Martyr*, which has been collected in anthologies of exis-

tentialist fiction. Another Spanish thinker, **Ortega y Gasset**, writing in 1914, held that human existence must always be defined as the individual person combined with the concrete circumstances of his life: "*Yo soy yo y mi circunstancia*" ("I am myself and my circumstances"). Sartre likewise believed that human existence is not an abstract matter, but is always situated ("*en situation*").

Although **Martin Buber** wrote his major philosophical works in German, and studied and taught at the Universities of Berlin and **Frankfurt**, he stands apart from the mainstream of German philosophy. Born into a Jewish family in Vienna in 1878, he was also a scholar of Jewish culture and involved at various times in **Zionism** and **Hasidism**. In 1938, he moved permanently to **Jerusalem**. His best-known philosophical work was the short book *I and Thou*, published in 1922. For Buber, the fundamental fact of human existence, too readily overlooked by scientific rationalism and abstract philosophical thought, is "man with man", a dialogue that takes place in the so-called "sphere of between" ("*das Zwischenmenschliche*").\*[53]

Two Russian thinkers, **Lev Shestov** and **Nikolai Berdyaev**, became well known as existentialist thinkers during their post-Revolutionary exiles in Paris. Shestov, born into a Ukrainian-Jewish family in Kiev, had launched an attack on rationalism and systematization in philosophy as early as 1905 in his book of aphorisms *All Things Are Possible*.

Berdyaev, also from Kiev but with a background in the Eastern Orthodox Church, drew a radical distinction between the world of spirit and the everyday world of objects. Human freedom, for Berdyaev, is rooted in the realm of spirit, a realm independent of scientific notions of causation. To the extent the individual human being lives in the objective world, he is estranged from authentic spiritual freedom. "Man" is not to be interpreted naturalistically, but as a being created in God's image, an originator of free, creative acts.\*[54] He published a major work on these themes, *The Destiny of Man*, in 1931.

**Gabriel Marcel**, long before coining the term "existentialism", introduced important existentialist themes to a French audience in his early essay "Existence and Objectivity" (1925) and in his *Metaphysical Journal* (1927).\*[55] A dramatist as well as a philosopher, Marcel found his philosophical starting point in a condition of metaphysical alienation: the human individual searching for harmony in a transient life. Harmony, for Marcel, was to be sought through "secondary reflection", a "dialogical" rather than "dialectical" approach to the world, characterized by "wonder and astonishment" and open to the "presence" of other people and of God rather than merely to "information" about them. For Marcel, such presence implied more than simply being there (as one thing might be in the presence of another thing); it connoted "extravagant" availability, and the willingness to put oneself at the disposal of the other.\*[56]

Marcel contrasted *secondary reflection* with abstract, scientific-technical *primary reflection*, which he associated with the activity of the abstract **Cartesian** ego. For Marcel, philosophy was a concrete activity undertaken by a sensing, feeling human being incarnate—embodied—in a concrete world.\*[55]\*[57] Although **Jean-Paul Sartre** adopted the term "existentialism" for his own philosophy in the 1940s, Marcel's thought has been described as "almost diametrically opposed" to that of Sartre.\*[55] Unlike Sartre, Marcel was a Christian, and became a Catholic convert in 1929.

In Germany, the psychologist and philosopher **Karl Jaspers**—who later described existentialism as a "phantom" created by the public\*[58]—called his own thought, heavily influenced by Kierkegaard and Nietzsche, *Existenzphilosophie*. For Jaspers, "Existenz-philosophy is the way of thought by means of which man seeks to become himself...This way of thought does not cognize objects, but elucidates and makes actual the being of the thinker".\*[59]

Jaspers, a professor at the University of **Heidelberg**, was acquainted with **Martin Heidegger**, who held a professorship at **Marburg** before acceding to Husserl's chair at **Freiburg** in 1928. They held many philosophical discussions, but later became estranged over Heidegger's support of **National Socialism** (Nazism). They shared an admiration for Kierkegaard,\*[60] and in the 1930s, Heidegger lectured extensively on Nietzsche. Nevertheless, the extent to which Heidegger should be considered an existentialist is debatable. In *Being and Time* he presented a method of rooting philosophical explanations in human existence (*Dasein*) to be analysed in terms of existential categories (*existentiale*); and this has led many commentators to treat him as an important figure in the existentialist movement.

### 10.7.3 After the Second World War

Following the **Second World War**, existentialism became a well-known and significant philosophical and cultural movement, mainly through the public prominence of two French writers, **Jean-Paul Sartre** and **Albert Camus**, who wrote best-selling novels, plays and widely read journalism as well as theoretical texts.\*[61] These years also saw the growing reputation of Heidegger's book *Being and Time* outside Germany.

Sartre dealt with existentialist themes in his 1938 novel *Nausea* and the short stories in his 1939 collection *The Wall*, and had published his treatise on existentialism, *Being and Nothingness*, in 1943, but it was in the two years following the liberation of Paris from the German occupying forces that he and his close associates—Camus, Simone de Beauvoir, Maurice Merleau-Ponty, and others—became internationally famous as the leading figures of a movement known as existentialism.\*[62] In a very short period of time, Camus and Sartre in particular be-





French philosophers Jean-Paul Sartre and Simone de Beauvoir

came the leading public intellectuals of post-war France, achieving by the end of 1945 “a fame that reached across all audiences.” \* [63] Camus was an editor of the most popular leftist (former **French Resistance**) newspaper *Combat*; Sartre launched his journal of leftist thought, *Les Temps Modernes*, and two weeks later gave the widely reported lecture on existentialism and **secular humanism** to a packed meeting of the Club Maintenant. Beauvoir wrote that “not a week passed without the newspapers discussing us”; \* [64] existentialism became “the first media craze of the postwar era.” \* [65]

By the end of 1947, Camus' earlier fiction and plays had been reprinted, his new play *Caligula* had been performed and his novel *The Plague* published; the first two novels of Sartre's *The Roads to Freedom* trilogy had appeared, as had Beauvoir's novel *The Blood of Others*. Works by Camus and Sartre were already appearing in foreign editions. The Paris-based existentialists had become famous. \* [62]

Sartre had traveled to Germany in 1930 to study the phenomenology of Edmund Husserl and Martin Heidegger, \* [66] and he included critical comments on their work in his major treatise *Being and Nothingness*. Heidegger's thought had also become known in French philosophical circles through its use by Alexandre Kojève in explicating Hegel in a series of lectures given in Paris

in the 1930s. \* [67] The lectures were highly influential; members of the audience included not only Sartre and Merleau-Ponty, but **Raymond Queneau**, **Georges Bataille**, **Louis Althusser**, **André Breton**, and **Jacques Lacan**. \* [68] A selection from Heidegger's *Being and Time* was published in French in 1938, and his essays began to appear in French philosophy journals.



French-Algerian philosopher, novelist, and playwright Albert Camus

Heidegger read Sartre's work and was initially impressed, commenting: “Here for the first time I encountered an independent thinker who, from the foundations up, has experienced the area out of which I think. Your work shows such an immediate comprehension of my philosophy as I have never before encountered.” \* [69] Later, however, in response to a question posed by his French follower **Jean Beaufret**, \* [70] Heidegger distanced himself from Sartre's position and existentialism in general in his *Letter on Humanism*. \* [71] Heidegger's reputation continued to grow in France during the 1950s and 1960s. In the 1960s, Sartre attempted to reconcile existentialism and **Marxism** in his work *Critique of Dialectical Reason*. A major theme throughout his writings was freedom and responsibility.

Camus was a friend of Sartre, until their falling-out, and wrote several works with existential themes including *The Rebel*, *Summer in Algiers*, *The Myth of Sisyphus*, and *The Stranger*, the latter being “considered—to what would have been Camus's irritation—the exemplary existentialist novel.” \* [72] Camus, like many others, rejected the existentialist label, and considered his works concerned with facing the absurd. In the titular book, Camus uses the analogy of the Greek myth of **Sisyphus** to demonstrate the futility of existence. In the myth, Sisyphus is



condemned for eternity to roll a rock up a hill, but when he reaches the summit, the rock will roll to the bottom again. Camus believes that this existence is pointless but that Sisyphus ultimately finds meaning and purpose in his task, simply by continually applying himself to it. The first half of the book contains an extended rebuttal of what Camus took to be existentialist philosophy in the works of Kierkegaard, Shestov, Heidegger, and Jaspers.

Simone de Beauvoir, an important existentialist who spent much of her life as Sartre's partner, wrote about feminist and existentialist ethics in her works, including *The Second Sex* and *The Ethics of Ambiguity*. Although often overlooked due to her relationship with Sartre,\*[73] de Beauvoir integrated existentialism with other forms of thinking such as feminism, unheard of at the time, resulting in alienation from fellow writers such as Camus.

Paul Tillich, an important existentialist theologian following Kierkegaard and Karl Barth, applied existentialist concepts to Christian theology, and helped introduce existential theology to the general public. His seminal work *The Courage to Be* follows Kierkegaard's analysis of anxiety and life's absurdity, but puts forward the thesis that modern humans must, via God, achieve selfhood in spite of life's absurdity. Rudolf Bultmann used Kierkegaard's and Heidegger's philosophy of existence to demythologize Christianity by interpreting Christian mythical concepts into existentialist concepts.

Maurice Merleau-Ponty, an existential phenomenologist, was for a time a companion of Sartre. Merleau-Ponty's *Phenomenology of Perception* (1945) was recognized as a major statement of French existentialism.\*[74] It has been said that Merleau-Ponty's work *Humanism and Terror* greatly influenced Sartre. However, in later years they were to disagree irreparably, dividing many existentialists such as de Beauvoir, who sided with Sartre.

Colin Wilson, an English writer, published his study *The Outsider* in 1956, initially to critical acclaim. In this book and others (e.g. *Introduction to the New Existentialism*), he attempted to reinvigorate what he perceived as a pessimistic philosophy and bring it to a wider audience. He was not, however, academically trained, and his work was attacked by professional philosophers for lack of rigor and critical standards.\*[75]

## 10.8 Influence outside philosophy

### 10.8.1 Art

#### Film and television

Stanley Kubrick's 1957 anti-war film *Paths of Glory* “illustrates, and even illuminates...existentialism” by examining the “necessary absurdity of the human condition” and the “horror of war”.\*[76] The film tells the story of a fictional World War I French army regiment ordered

to attack an impregnable German stronghold; when the attack fails, three soldiers are chosen at random, court-martialed by a “kangaroo court”, and executed by firing squad. The film examines existentialist ethics, such as the issue of whether objectivity is possible and the “problem of authenticity”.\*[76] Orson Welles' 1962 film *The Trial*, based upon Franz Kafka's book of the same name (Der Process), is characteristic of both existentialist and absurdist themes in its depiction of a man (Joseph K.) arrested for a crime for which the charges are neither revealed to him nor to the reader.

*Neon Genesis Evangelion* is a Japanese science fiction animation series created by the anime studio Gainax and was both directed and written by Hideaki Anno. Existential themes of individuality, consciousness, freedom, choice, and responsibility are heavily relied upon throughout the entire series, particularly through the philosophies of Jean-Paul Sartre and Søren Kierkegaard. Episode 16's title, “The Sickness Unto Death, And...” (死に至る病、そして *Shi ni itaru yamai, soshite*) is a reference to Kierkegaard's book, *The Sickness Unto Death*. Some contemporary films dealing with existentialist issues include *Fight Club*, *I ♥ Huckabees*, *Waking Life*, *The Matrix*, *Ordinary People*, and *Life in a Day*.\*[77] Likewise, films throughout the 20th century such as *The Seventh Seal*, *Ikiru*, *Taxi Driver*, the *Toy Story* films, *The Great Silence*, *Ghost in the Shell*, *Harold and Maude*, *High Noon*, *Easy Rider*, *One Flew Over the Cuckoo's Nest*, *A Clockwork Orange*, *Groundhog Day*, *Apocalypse Now*, *Badlands*, and *Blade Runner* also have existentialist qualities.\*[78]

Notable directors known for their existentialist films include Ingmar Bergman, François Truffaut, Jean-Luc Godard, Michelangelo Antonioni, Akira Kurosawa, Terrence Malick, Stanley Kubrick, Andrei Tarkovsky, Hideaki Anno, Wes Anderson, Woody Allen, and Christopher Nolan.\*[79] Charlie Kaufman's *Synecdoche, New York* focuses on the protagonist's desire to find existential meaning.\*[80] Similarly, in Kurosawa's *Red Beard*, the protagonist's experiences as an intern in a rural health clinic in Japan lead him to an existential crisis whereby he questions his reason for being. This, in turn, leads him to a better understanding of humanity. The French film, *Mood Indigo* (directed by Michel Gondry) embraced various elements of existentialism. The film *The Shawshank Redemption*, released in 1994, depicts life in a prison in Maine, United States to explore several existentialist concepts.\*[81]

#### Literature

Existential perspectives are also found in modern literature to varying degrees, especially since the 1920s. Louis-Ferdinand Céline's *Journey to the End of the Night* (Voyage au bout de la nuit, 1932) celebrated by both Sartre and Beauvoir, contained many of the themes that would be found in later existential literature, and is in some ways, the proto-existential novel. Jean-Paul

Sartre's 1938 novel *Nausea*\*[82] was “steeped in Existential ideas”, and is considered an accessible way of grasping his philosophical stance.\*[83] Between 1900 and 1960, other authors such as Albert Camus, Franz Kafka, Rainer Maria Rilke, T.S. Eliot, Herman Hesse, Luigi Pirandello,\*[25]\*[26]\*[28]\*[84]\*[85]\*[86] Ralph Ellison,\*[87]\*[88]\*[89]\*[90] and Jack Kerouac, composed literature or poetry that contained, to varying degrees, elements of existential or proto-existential thought. The philosophy's influence even reached pulp literature shortly after the turn of the 20th century, as seen in the existential disparity witnessed in Man's lack of control of his fate in the works of H.P. Lovecraft.\*[91] Since the late 1960s, a great deal of cultural activity in literature contains postmodernist as well as existential elements. Books such as *Do Androids Dream of Electric Sheep?* (1968) (now republished as *Blade Runner*) by Philip K. Dick, *Slaughterhouse-Five* by Kurt Vonnegut, and *Fight Club* by Chuck Palahniuk all distort the line between reality and appearance while simultaneously espousing existential themes.

## Theatre

Jean-Paul Sartre wrote *No Exit* in 1944, an existentialist play originally published in French as *Huis Clos* (meaning *In Camera* or “behind closed doors”), which is the source of the popular quote, “Hell is other people.” (In French, “L'enfer, c'est les autres”). The play begins with a Valet leading a man into a room that the audience soon realizes is in hell. Eventually he is joined by two women. After their entry, the Valet leaves and the door is shut and locked. All three expect to be tortured, but no torturer arrives. Instead, they realize they are there to torture each other, which they do effectively by probing each other's sins, desires, and unpleasant memories.

Existentialist themes are displayed in the Theatre of the Absurd, notably in Samuel Beckett's *Waiting for Godot*, in which two men divert themselves while they wait expectantly for someone (or something) named Godot who never arrives. They claim Godot is an acquaintance, but in fact, hardly know him, admitting they would not recognize him if they saw him. Samuel Beckett, once asked who or what Godot is, replied, “If I knew, I would have said so in the play.” To occupy themselves, the men eat, sleep, talk, argue, sing, play games, exercise, swap hats, and contemplate suicide—anything “to hold the terrible silence at bay”.\*[92] The play “exploits several archetypal forms and situations, all of which lend themselves to both comedy and pathos.”\*[93] The play also illustrates an attitude toward human experience on earth: the poignancy, oppression, camaraderie, hope, corruption, and bewilderment of human experience that can be reconciled only in the mind and art of the absurdist. The play examines questions such as death, the meaning of human existence and the place of God in human existence.

Tom Stoppard's *Rosencrantz & Guildenstern Are Dead*

is an absurdist tragicomedy first staged at the Edinburgh Festival Fringe in 1966.\*[94] The play expands upon the exploits of two minor characters from Shakespeare's *Hamlet*. Comparisons have also been drawn to Samuel Beckett's *Waiting For Godot*, for the presence of two central characters who appear almost as two halves of a single character. Many plot features are similar as well: the characters pass time by playing Questions, impersonating other characters, and interrupting each other or remaining silent for long periods of time. The two characters are portrayed as two clowns or fools in a world beyond their understanding. They stumble through philosophical arguments while not realizing the implications, and muse on the irrationality and randomness of the world.

Jean Anouilh's *Antigone* also presents arguments founded on existentialist ideas.\*[95] It is a tragedy inspired by Greek mythology and the play of the same name (*Antigone*, by Sophocles) from the 5th century BC. In English, it is often distinguished from its antecedent by being pronounced in its original French form, approximately “Ante-GÖN.” The play was first performed in Paris on 6 February 1944, during the Nazi occupation of France. Produced under Nazi censorship, the play is purposefully ambiguous with regards to the rejection of authority (represented by Antigone) and the acceptance of it (represented by Creon). The parallels to the French Resistance and the Nazi occupation have been drawn. Antigone rejects life as desperately meaningless but without affirmatively choosing a noble death. The crux of the play is the lengthy dialogue concerning the nature of power, fate, and choice, during which Antigone says that she is, “... disgusted with [the]...promise of a humdrum happiness.” She states that she would rather die than live a mediocre existence.

Critic Martin Esslin in his book *Theatre of the Absurd* pointed out how many contemporary playwrights such as Samuel Beckett, Eugène Ionesco, Jean Genet, and Arthur Adamov wove into their plays the existentialist belief that we are absurd beings loose in a universe empty of real meaning. Esslin noted that many of these playwrights demonstrated the philosophy better than did the plays by Sartre and Camus. Though most of such playwrights, subsequently labeled “Absurdist” (based on Esslin's book), denied affiliations with existentialism and were often staunchly anti-philosophical (for example Ionesco often claimed he identified more with Pataphysics or with Surrealism than with existentialism), the playwrights are often linked to existentialism based on Esslin's observation.\*[96]

## 10.8.2 Psychoanalysis and psychotherapy

Main article: *Existential therapy*

A major offshoot of existentialism as a philosophy is existentialist psychology and psychoanalysis, which first crys-

tallized in the work of **Otto Rank**, Freud's closest associate for 20 years. Without awareness of the writings of Rank, **Ludwig Binswanger** was influenced by **Freud**, **Edmund Husserl**, **Heidegger**, and **Sartre**. A later figure was **Viktor Frankl**, who briefly met Freud and studied with **Jung** as a young man.\*[97] His **logotherapy** can be regarded as a form of existentialist therapy. The existentialists would also influence **social psychology**, **antipositivist micro-sociology**, **symbolic interactionism**, and **post-structuralism**, with the work of thinkers such as **Georg Simmel**\*[98] and **Michel Foucault**. Foucault was a great reader of **Kierkegaard** even though he almost never refers this author, who nonetheless had for him an importance as secret as it was decisive.\*[99]

An early contributor to existentialist psychology in the United States was **Rollo May**, who was strongly influenced by **Kierkegaard** and **Otto Rank**. One of the most prolific writers on techniques and theory of existentialist psychology in the USA is **Irvin D. Yalom**. Yalom states that

Aside from their reaction against Freud's mechanistic, deterministic model of the mind and their assumption of a phenomenological approach in therapy, the existentialist analysts have little in common and have never been regarded as a cohesive ideological school. These thinkers—who include **Ludwig Binswanger**, **Medard Boss**, **Eugène Minkowski**, **V.E. Geb-sattel**, **Roland Kuhn**, **G. Caruso**, **F.T. Buy-tendijk**, **G. Bally** and **Victor Frankl**—were almost entirely unknown to the American psychotherapeutic community until **Rollo May's** highly influential 1985 book *Existence*—and especially his introductory essay—introduced their work into this country.\*[100]

A more recent contributor to the development of a European version of existentialist psychotherapy is the British-based **Emmy van Deurzen**.

Anxiety's importance in existentialism makes it a popular topic in **psychotherapy**. Therapists often offer existentialist **philosophy** as an explanation for anxiety. The assertion is that anxiety is manifested of an individual's complete freedom to decide, and complete responsibility for the outcome of such decisions. Psychotherapists using an existentialist approach believe that a patient can harness his anxiety and use it constructively. Instead of suppressing anxiety, patients are advised to use it as grounds for change. By embracing anxiety as inevitable, a person can use it to achieve his full potential in life. **Humanistic psychology** also had major impetus from existentialist psychology and shares many of the fundamental tenets. **Terror management theory**, based on the writings of **Ernest Becker** and **Otto Rank**, is a developing area of study within the academic study of psychology. It looks at what researchers claim are implicit emotional

reactions of people confronted with the knowledge that they will eventually die.

Also, **Gerd B. Achenbach** has refreshed the socratic tradition with his own blend of **philosophical counseling**. So did **Michel Weber** with his **Chromatiques Center** in Belgium.

## 10.9 Criticisms

### 10.9.1 General criticisms

**Walter Kaufmann** criticized 'the profoundly unsound methods and the dangerous contempt for reason that have been so prominent in existentialism.'\*[101] **Logical positivist** philosophers, such as **Rudolf Carnap** and **A. J. Ayer**, assert that existentialists are often confused about the verb "to be" in their analyses of "being".\*[102] Specifically, they argue that the verb is transitive and pre-fixed to a **predicate** (e.g., an apple *is red*) (without a predicate, the word is meaningless), and that existentialists frequently misuse the term in this manner. **Colin Wilson** has stated in his book *The Angry Years* that existentialism has created many of its own difficulties: "we can see how this question of freedom of the will has been vitiated by post-romantic philosophy, with its inbuilt tendency to laziness and **boredom**, we can also see how it came about that existentialism found itself in a hole of its own digging, and how the philosophical developments since then have amounted to walking in circles round that hole".\*[103]

### 10.9.2 Sartre's philosophy

Many critics argue **Jean-Paul Sartre's** philosophy is contradictory. Specifically, they argue that Sartre makes metaphysical arguments despite his claiming that his philosophical views ignore metaphysics. **Herbert Marcuse** criticized Sartre's 1943 *Being and Nothingness* for projecting anxiety and meaninglessness onto the nature of existence itself: "Insofar as Existentialism is a philosophical doctrine, it remains an idealistic doctrine: it **hypostatizes** specific historical conditions of human existence into ontological and metaphysical characteristics. Existentialism thus becomes part of the very ideology which it attacks, and its radicalism is illusory".\*[104]

In *Letter on Humanism*, **Heidegger** criticized Sartre's existentialism:

Existentialism says existence precedes essence. In this statement he is taking *existentia* and *essentia* according to their metaphysical meaning, which, from Plato's time on, has said that *essentia* precedes *existentia*. Sartre reverses this statement. But the reversal of a metaphysical statement remains a metaphysical statement. With it, he stays

with metaphysics, in oblivion of the truth of Being.\* [105]

## 10.10 See also

- Abandonment (existentialism)
- Disenchantment
- Existential phenomenology
- Existentiell
- List of existentialists
- Meaning (existential)
- Meaning-making

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- *The Existential Primer*
- Buddhists, Existentialists and Situationists: Waking up in Waking Life

### 10.12.1 Journals and articles

- Stirrings Still: The International Journal of Existential Literature
- Existential Analysis published by The Society for Existential Analysis

## 10.12 External links

- Existentialism at DMOZ
- "Existentialism" . *Internet Encyclopedia of Philosophy*.

# Chapter 11

## Dualism

For other uses, see [Dualism \(disambiguation\)](#).

**Dualism** (from the [Latin](#) word *duo* meaning “two”)\*[1] denotes the state of two parts. The term *dualism* was originally coined to denote co-eternal [binary opposition](#), a meaning that is preserved in [metaphysical](#) and [philosophical duality](#) discourse but has been more generalized in other usages to indicate a system which contains two essential parts.

Moral dualism is the belief of the great complement of or conflict between the benevolent and the malevolent. It simply implies that there are two moral opposites at work, independent of any interpretation of what might be “moral” and independent of how these may be represented. Moral opposites might, for example, exist in a worldview which has one god, more than one god, or none. By contrast, [ditheism](#) or [bitheism](#) implies (at least) two gods. While [bitheism](#) implies harmony, [ditheism](#) implies rivalry and opposition, such as between good and evil, or light and dark, or summer and winter. For example, a ditheistic system would be one in which one god is a creator, and the other a destroyer.

Alternatively, in ontological dualism, the world is divided into two overarching categories. The opposition and combination of the universe's two basic principles of [yin and yang](#) is a large part of Chinese philosophy, and is an important feature of [Taoism](#), both as a philosophy and as a religion (it is also discussed in [Confucianism](#)).

### 11.1 Moral dualism

Moral dualism is the belief of the great complement or conflict between the benevolent and the malevolent.

Like [ditheism](#)/[bitheism](#) (see below), moral dualism does not imply the absence of [monist](#) or [monotheistic](#) principles. Moral dualism simply implies that there are two moral opposites at work, independent of any interpretation of what might be “moral” and - unlike [ditheism](#)/[bitheism](#) - independent of how these may be represented.

For example, [Mazdaism](#) ([Mazdean Zoroastrianism](#)) is both dualistic and monotheistic (but not monist by def-

inition) since in that philosophy God—the Creator—is purely good, and the antithesis—which is also uncreated—is an absolute one. [Zurvanism](#) ([Zurvanite Zoroastrianism](#)), [Manichaeism](#) and [Mandaeism](#), are representative of dualistic *and* monist philosophies since each has a supreme and transcendental First Principle from which the two equal-but-opposite entities then emanate. This is also true for the lesser-known Christian [gnostic](#) religions, such as [Bogomils](#), [Catharism](#), and so on. More complex forms of monist dualism also exist, for instance in [Hermeticism](#), where *Nous* “thought” - that is described to have created man - brings forth both good and evil, dependent on interpretation, whether it receives prompting from the God or from the Demon. Duality with [pluralism](#) is considered a logical fallacy.

#### 11.1.1 History

Moral dualism began as a theological belief. Dualism was first seen implicitly in Egyptian Religious beliefs by the contrast of the gods Set (disorder, death) and Osiris (order, life).\*[2] The first explicit conception of dualism came from the Ancient Persian Religion of [Zoroastrianism](#) around the mid-fifth century BC. Zoroastrianism is a monotheistic religion that believes that [Ahura Mazda](#) is the eternal creator of all good things. Any violations of Ahura Mazda's order arise from [druj](#), which is everything uncreated. From this comes a significant choice for humans to make. Either they fully participate in human life for Ahura Mazda or they do not and give [druj](#) power. Personal dualism is even more distinct in the [beliefs](#) of later religions.

The religious dualism of [Christianity](#) between good and evil is not a perfect dualism as God (good) will inevitably destroy Satan (evil). Early Christian Dualism is largely based on Platonic Dualism (See: [Neoplatonism](#) and [Christianity](#)). There is also a personal dualism in Christianity with a soul-body distinction based on the idea of an immaterial Christian Soul.\*[3]



## 11.2 Duotheism, bitheism, ditheism

See also: [Dualistic cosmology](#)

In *theology*, *dualism* may refer to duotheism, bitheism, or ditheism. Although ditheism/bitheism imply moral dualism, they are not equivalent: ditheism/bitheism implies (at least) two gods, while moral dualism does not imply any *-theism* (*theos* = *god*) whatsoever.

Dualism can also refer to the relationship between God and creation. A dualism of God and creation exists in some traditions of Christianity, like [Paulicianism](#), [Catharism](#), and [Gnosticism](#). The Paulicians, a Byzantine Christian sect, believed that the universe, created through evil, exists separately from a moral God. The [Dvaita Vedanta](#) school of Indian philosophy also espouses a dualism between God and the universe. The first and the more important reality is that of Vishnu or Brahman. Vishnu is the supreme Self, God, the absolute truth of the universe, the independent reality. The second reality is that of dependent but equally real universe that exists with its own separate essence.

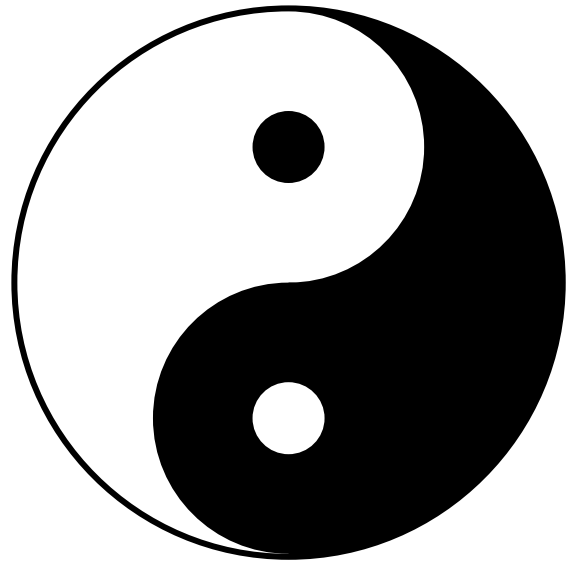
Both bitheism and ditheism imply a belief in two equally powerful gods with complementary or antonymous properties; however, while bitheism implies harmony, ditheism implies rivalry and opposition, such as between good and evil, or bright and dark, or summer and winter. For example, a ditheistic system would be one in which one god is creative, the other is destructive (cf. [theodicy](#)). In the original conception of [Zoroastrianism](#), for example, [Ahura Mazda](#) was the spirit of ultimate good, while [Ahriman](#) ([Angra Mainyu](#)) was the spirit of ultimate evil.

In a bitheistic system, by contrast, where the two deities are not in conflict or opposition, one could be male and the other female (cf. duotheism). One well-known example of a bitheistic or duotheistic theology based on gender polarity is found in the [neopagan](#) religion of [Wicca](#). In Wicca, dualism is represented in the belief of a god and a goddess as a dual partnership in ruling the universe. This is centered on the worship of a [divine couple](#), the [Moon Goddess](#) and the [Horned God](#), who are regarded as lovers. However, there is also a ditheistic theme within traditional Wicca, as the Horned God has dual aspects of bright and dark - relating to day/night, summer/winter - expressed as the Oak King and the Holly King, who in Wiccan myth and ritual are said to engage in battle twice a year for the hand of the Goddess, resulting in the changing seasons. (Within Wicca, bright and dark do not correspond to notions of “good” and “evil” but are aspects of the natural world, much like yin and yang in Taoism.)

However, bitheistic and ditheistic principles are not always so easily contrastable, for instance in a system where one god is the representative of summer and drought and the other of winter and rain/fertility (cf. the mythology

of [Persephone](#)). [Marcionism](#), an early Christian sect, held that the Old and New Testaments were the work of two opposing gods: both were First Principles, but of different religions.\* [4]

## 11.3 Ontological dualism



*The yin and yang symbolizes the duality in nature and all things in the Taoist religion.*

Alternatively, *dualism* can mean the tendency of humans to perceive and understand the world as being divided into two overarching [categories](#). In this sense, it is dualistic when one perceives a tree as a thing separate from everything surrounding it. This form of ontological dualism exists in Taoism and Confucianism, beliefs that divide the universe into the complementary oppositions of [yin and yang](#).\* [5] In traditions such as classical Hinduism, [Zen Buddhism](#) or [Islamic Sufism](#), a key to enlightenment is “transcending” this sort of dualistic thinking, without merely substituting dualism with [monism](#) or [pluralism](#).

### 11.3.1 In Chinese philosophy

The opposition and combination of the universe’s two basic principles of [yin and yang](#) is a large part of [Chinese philosophy](#), and is an important feature of [Taoism](#), both as a philosophy and as a religion, although the concept developed much earlier. Some argue that Yin and Yang were originally an earth and sky god, respectively.\* [6] As one of the oldest principles in Chinese philosophy, Yin and yang are also discussed in [Confucianism](#), but to a lesser extent.

Some of the common associations with yang and yin, respectively, are: male and female, [light](#) and [dark](#), active and passive, motion and stillness. Some scholars recognize that the two ideas may have originally referred to two

opposite sides of a mountain, facing towards and away from the sun.\*[6] The yin and yang symbol in actuality has very little to do with Western dualism; instead it represents the philosophy of balance, where two opposites co-exist in harmony and are able to transmute into each other. In the yin-yang symbol there is a dot of yin in yang and a dot of yang in yin. In Taoism, this symbolizes the inter-connectedness of the opposite forces as different aspects of Tao, the First Principle. Contrast is needed to create a distinguishable reality, without which we would experience nothingness. Therefore, the independent principles of yin and yang are actually dependent on one another for each other's distinguishable existence.

The complementary dualistic concept seen in yin and yang represent the reciprocal interaction throughout nature, related to a **feedback loop**, where opposing forces do not exchange in opposition but instead exchange reciprocally to promote stabilization similar to **homeostasis**. An underlying principle in Taoism states that within every independent entity lies a part of its opposite. Within sickness lies health and vice versa. This is because all opposites are manifestations of the single Tao, and are therefore not independent from one another, but rather a variation of the same unifying force throughout all of nature.

## 11.4 Mind-matter and mind-body dualism

### 11.4.1 In philosophy of mind

Main article: [Dualism \(philosophy of mind\)](#)

In **philosophy of mind**, dualism is any of a narrow variety of views about the relationship between mind and matter, which claims that mind and matter are two **ontologically** separate categories. In particular, mind-body dualism claims that neither the mind nor matter can be reduced to each other in any way, and thus is opposed to **materialism** in general, and **reductive materialism** in particular. Mind-body dualism can exist as **substance dualism** which claims that the mind and the body are composed of a distinct substance, and as **property dualism** which claims that there may not be a distinction in substance, but that mental and physical properties are still categorically distinct, and not reducible to each other. This type of dualism is sometimes referred to as "*mind and body*" and stands in contrast to philosophical **monism**, which views mind and matter as being ultimately the same kind of thing. See also **Cartesian dualism**, **substance dualism**, **epiphenomenalism**.

Dualism is a view about the relationship between mind and matter which claims that mind and matter are two ontologically separate categories. Mind-body dualism claims that neither the mind nor matter can be reduced

to each other in any way. Western dualist philosophical traditions (as exemplified by Descartes) equate mind with the conscious self and theorize on consciousness on the basis of mind/body dualism. By contrast, some Eastern philosophies draw a metaphysical line between consciousness and matter —where matter includes both body and mind.

### 11.4.2 In Buddhist philosophy

During the classical era of **Buddhist philosophy in India**, philosophers such as **Dharmakirti** argue for a dualism between states of consciousness and **Buddhist atoms** (the basic building blocks that make up reality), according to "the standard interpretation" of Dharmakirti's **Buddhist metaphysics**.\*[7] Typically in **Western philosophy**, dualism is considered to be a dualism between mind (non-physical) and brain (physical), which ultimately involves mind interacting with the physical brain, and therefore also interacting with the micro-particles (basic building blocks) that make up the brain tissue. Buddhist dualism, in Dharmakirti's sense, is different in that it is not a dualism between the mind and brain, but rather between states of consciousness (nonphysical) and basic building blocks (according to the Buddhist atomism of Dharmakirti, Buddhist atoms are also nonphysical: they are unstructured points of energy). Like many Buddhists from 600-1000 CE, Dharmakirti's philosophy involved **mereological nihilism**, meaning that other than states of consciousness, the only things that exist are momentary quantum particles, much like the particles of **quantum physics** (quarks, electrons, etc.).

### 11.4.3 History

The first significant argument against dualism came from **Thomas Hobbes's** (1588–1679) materialist critique of the human person. Hobbes argues that all of human experience comes from biological processes contained within the body (see: *The Leviathan*\*[8]). In response to Hobbes, the **French philosopher René Descartes** (1596–1650) developed **Cartesian dualism**, which posits that there is a divisible, mechanical body and an indivisible, immaterial mind which interact with one another. The body perceives external inputs and the awareness of them comes from the soul. The point of interaction between the two is at the pineal gland in the brain.\*[9]

During the 19th and 20th centuries, materialistic monism became the norm.\*[10] Still, in addition to already discussed theories of dualism (particularly the Christian and Cartesian models) there are new theories in the defense of dualism. **Naturalistic dualism** comes from Australian philosopher, **David Chalmers** (born 1966) who argues there is an explanatory gap between objective and subjective experience that cannot be bridged by reductionism because consciousness is, at least, logically autonomous

of the physical properties upon which it supervenes. According to Chalmers, a naturalistic account of property dualism requires a new fundamental category of properties described by new laws of **supervenience**; the challenge being analogous to that of understanding electricity based on the mechanistic and Newtonian models of materialism prior to **Maxwell's equations**.

A similar defense comes from Australian philosopher **Frank Jackson** (born 1943) who revived the theory of **epiphenomenalism** which argues that mental states do not play a role in physical states. Jackson argues that there are two kinds of dualism. The first is *substance dualism* that assumes there is second, non-corporeal form of reality. In this form, body and soul are two different substances. The second form is *property dualism* that says that body and soul are different *properties* of the same body. He claims that functions of the mind/soul are internal, very private experiences that are not accessible to observation by others, and therefore not accessible by science (at least not yet). We can know everything, for example, about a bat's facility for echolocation, but we will never know how the bat experiences that phenomenon. In Jackson's mind experiment, he imagines a girl who grows up in a black-and-white room. She may grow up learning all about the scientific facts of colors, but has no way of experiencing colors other than black or white. When someone brings a red tomato into her room, she is stunned. She discovers a new fact: the experience of red is 'like this.' That experience is not a physical fact but a conscious one.\*[11]

#### 11.4.4 Soul dualism

Main article: **Soul dualism**

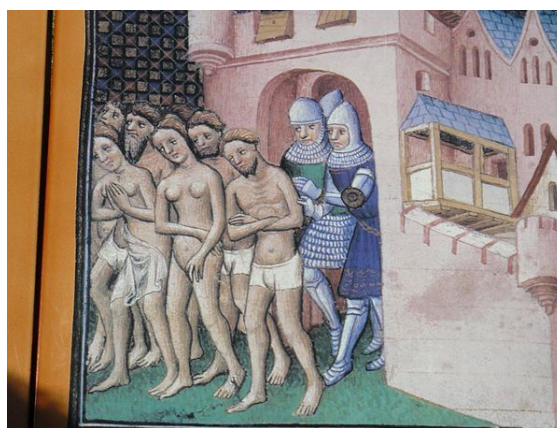
In some cultures, people (or also other beings) are believed to have two or more kinds of **soul**. In several cases, one of these souls is associated with body functions (and is sometimes thought to disappear after death, but not always), and the other one is able to leave the body (for example, a **shaman's free-soul** may be held to be able to undertake a spirit journey). The plethora of soul types may be even more complex.

The **Bipartite** view of **theology** recognizes the existence of both material and immaterial aspects of human life, typically body and soul. This is distinct from the **Tripartite** view that holds soul and spirit to be separate aspects of a person along with the body.

## 11.5 Theistic dualism

In theology, dualism can refer to the relationship between God and creation or God and the universe. This form of dualism is a belief shared in certain traditions of Christianity and Hinduism.\*[12]

### 11.5.1 In Christianity



*The Cathars being expelled from Carcassonne in 1209. The Cathars were denounced as heretics by the Roman Catholic Church for their dualist beliefs.*

The dualism between God and creation has existed as a central belief in multiple historical sects and traditions of Christianity, including **Marcionism**, **Catharism**, **Paulicianism**, and **Gnostic Christianity**. Christian dualism refers to the belief that God and creation are distinct, but interrelated through an indivisible bond.\*[12] In sects like the Cathars and the Paulicians, this is a dualism between the material world, created by an evil god, and a moral god. Historians divide Christian dualism into absolute dualism, which held that the good and evil gods were equally powerful, and mitigated dualism, which held that material evil was subordinate to the spiritual good.\*[13] The belief, by Christian theologians who adhere to a libertarian or compatibilist view of free will, that **free will** separates humankind from God has also been characterized as a form of dualism.\*[12] The theologian Leroy Stephens Rouner compares the dualism of Christianity with the dualism that exists in Zoroastrianism and the Vedanta tradition of Hinduism. The theological use of the word dualism dates back to 1700, in a book that describes the dualism between good and evil.\*[12]

The tolerance of dualism ranges widely among the different Christian traditions. As a monotheistic religion, the conflict between dualism and monism has existed in Christianity since its inception.\*[14] The 1912 *Catholic Encyclopedia* describes that, in the Catholic Church, "the dualistic hypothesis of an eternal world existing side by side with God was of course rejected" by the thirteenth century, but mind-body dualism was not.\*[15] The **problem of evil** is difficult to reconcile with absolute monism, and has prompted some Christian sects to veer towards dualism. Gnostic forms of Christianity were more dualistic, and some Gnostic traditions posited that the Devil was separate from God as an independent deity.\*[14] The Christian dualists of the Byzantine Empire, the Paulicians, were seen as Manichean heretics by Byzantine theologians. This tradition of Christian dualism, founded by **Constantine-Silvanus**, argued that the

universe was created through evil and separate from a moral God.\* [16]

The **Cathars**, a Christian sect in southern France, believed that there was a dualism between two gods, one representing good and the other representing evil. The Roman Catholic Church denounced the Cathars as heretics, and sought to crush the movement in the 13th century. The **Albigensian Crusade** was initiated by **Pope Innocent III** in 1208 to remove the Cathars from **Languedoc** in France, where they were known as **Albigesians**. The **Inquisition**, which began in 1233 under **Pope Gregory IX**, also targeted the Cathars.\* [17]

## 11.5.2 In Hinduism

**Dvaita Vedanta** (dualistic conclusions of the **Vedas**) school of **Indian philosophy** espouses a dualism between God and the universe by theorizing the existence of two separate **realities**. The first and the more important reality is that of **Vishnu** or **Brahman**. Vishnu is the supreme **Self**, God, the absolute truth of the universe, the independent reality. The second reality is that of dependent but equally real universe that exists with its own separate essence. Everything that is composed of the second reality, such as individual soul (**Jiva**), matter, etc. exist with their own separate reality. The distinguishing factor of this philosophy as opposed to **Advaita Vedanta** (monistic conclusion of **Vedas**) is that God takes on a personal role and is seen as a real eternal entity that governs and controls the universe.\* [18] Because the existence of individuals is grounded in the divine, they are depicted as reflections, images or even shadows of the divine, but never in any way identical with the divine. **Salvation** therefore is described as the realization that all finite reality is essentially dependent on the Supreme.\* [19]

## 11.6 Consciousness–matter dualism

While **Western philosophical traditions**, as exemplified by **Descartes**, equate mind with the conscious self and theorize on consciousness on the basis of mind/body dualism; some **Eastern philosophies** provide an alternate viewpoint, intimately related to **substance dualism**, by drawing a metaphysical line between consciousness and matter —where matter includes both body and mind.\* [20]\* [21]

### 11.6.1 In Samkhya and Yogic philosophy

In **Samkhya** and **Yoga** schools of **Indian philosophy**, “there are two irreducible, innate and independent realities 1) consciousness itself (**Purusha**) 2) primordial materiality (**Prakriti**)”. The unconscious primordial mate-

riality, **Prakriti**, contains 23 components including intellect (**buddhi**, mahat), ego (**ahamkara**) and mind (**manas**). Therefore, the intellect, mind and ego are all seen as forms of unconscious matter.\* [22] Thought processes and mental events are conscious only to the extent they receive illumination from **Purusha**. Consciousness is compared to light which illuminates the material configurations or ‘shapes’ assumed by the mind. So intellect after receiving cognitive structures form the mind and illumination from pure consciousness creates thought structures that appear to be conscious.\* [23] **Ahamkara**, the ego or the phenomenal self, appropriates all mental experiences to itself and thus, personalizes the objective activities of mind and intellect by assuming possession of them.\* [24] But consciousness is itself independent of the thought structures it illuminates.\* [23]

By including mind in the realm of matter, **Samkhya-Yoga** avoids one of the most serious pitfalls of **Cartesian dualism**, the violation of physical conservation laws. Because mind is an evolute of matter, mental events are granted causal efficacy and are therefore able to initiate bodily motions.\* [25]

## 11.7 In philosophy of science

In the **philosophy of science**, *dualism* often refers to the dichotomy between the “subject” (the observer) and the “object” (the observed). Another *dualism*, in **Popperian** philosophy of science refers to “hypothesis” and “refutation” (for example, experimental refutation). This notion also carried to **Popper's political philosophy**.

## 11.8 In physics

In **physics**, *dualism* refers to **media** with properties that can be associated with the mechanics of two different phenomena. Because these two phenomena's mechanics are mutually exclusive, both are needed in order to describe the possible behaviors. All **matter**, for example, has **wave–particle duality**.

## 11.9 Dualism in modern and contemporary philosophy

The American philosopher **Arthur Oncken Lovejoy** in his *The Revolt Against Dualism* (1960) develops a critique of the modern **new realism**, repositing a form of dualism based on a “fork of human experience.”



## 11.10 Political dualism

In politics, dualism refers to the separation of powers between the legislature and executive.

In the context of the history of the Austro-Hungarian Empire, “dualism” refers to the political doctrine of Austria's and Hungary's co-equality. The phrase “during dualism” (Hungarian: *dualizmus alatt*) is used in Hungarian historiography as shorthand for “during the dual monarchy.”

## 11.11 Cybernetics

In cybernetics, Norbert Wiener described “Manichean devils” (dualistic adversarial systems) as those systems or problems in which an intelligent adversary is attempting to exploit weaknesses of the investigator (such as in a game-playing opponent, adversarial law, evolutionary systems of predator/parasite and prey/host, politics/en enslavement attempts, etc.). Wiener's “Cybernetics” contrasted such systems with “Augustinian devils” that were systems or problems that, though very complex and difficult to figure out, did not feature an adversary with contrary intent. Victories or “expansions of knowledge” in such systems were able to be built upon incrementally, through science (experimentation expanding empirical knowledge bases). Wiener noted that temporary weaknesses (such as errors to perceive all components of a system) were not fatal in attempts to defeat “Augustinian devils” because another experiment could simply be pursued (and he noted that he had personally defeated many “Augustinian devils” with his contributions to science and engineering). Wiener further noted that temporary lapses in judgment against “Manichean devils” were more often fatal or destructive, due to the desire of the opponent to “win/survive at all costs,” even going so far as to introduce any level of deception into the system (and he noted that he had been defeated by many “Manichean devils,” such as on occasions when he was temporarily careless in chess). Although this “duality” between “complexity” and “opposition” may seem obvious, there are deep implications in many areas of science, such as game theory, political science, computer science, network science, security science, military science, evolutionary biology, cryptography, etc.

## 11.12 See also

- Advaita Vedanta
- Atheism
- Dialectic
- Didache – The Two Ways
- Dualism (philosophy of mind)

- Dualistic cosmology
- False dilemma
- Legal dualism
  - Legal pluralism
- Manichaeism (moral dualism)
- Monism
- Nondualism
- Pantheism
- Pluralism (philosophy)
- Reductionism
- Rhizome (philosophy)
- *Table of Opposites*
- Yanantin (complementary dualism in Native South American culture)

## 11.13 Notes

- [1] The term *dualism* is recorded in English since 1785–95 (*Random House Webster's Unabridged Dictionary*, 2001, “dualism” ).
- [2] “Egypt and Mesopotamia”
- [3] “soul”
- [4] Enrico Riparelli, *Il volto del Cristo dualista. Da Marcione ai catari*, Peter Lang, Bern - Berlin - Bruxelles - Frankfurt am Main - New York - Oxford - Wien 2008, 368 pp. ISBN 978-3-03911-490-0
- [5] Girardot, N.J. (1988). *Myth and Meaning in Early Taoism: The Theme of Chaos (hun-tun)*. University of California Press. p. 247. ISBN 978-0-520-06460-7.
- [6] Roberts, Jeremy. “Yin and Yang” . *Ancient and Medieval History*. Facts on File. Retrieved 19 March 2017.
- [7] Georges B.J. Dreyfus, *Recognizing Reality*, SUNY Press 1996 (ISBN 978-0791430989)
- [8] “Leviathan – Introduction” Archived July 9, 2011, at the Wayback Machine.. oregonstate.edu.
- [9] “Cartesian Dualism: Mind and Brain Interaction
- [10] “Materialism”
- [11] Jackson, Frank. 1990. "Epiphenomenal Qualia," in 'Mind and Cognition,' W. Lycan (ed.). Oxford: Blackwell.
- [12] Rouner, Leroy (1983). *The Westminster Dictionary of Christian Theology*. Westminster John Knox Press. p. 166. ISBN 978-0-664-22748-7.

- [13] Peters, Edward (2011). *Heresy and Authority in Medieval Europe*. University of Pennsylvania Press. p. 106. ISBN 978-0-8122-0680-7.
  - [14] Russell, Jeffrey (1998). *A History of Heaven: The Singing Silence*. Princeton University Press. p. 53. ISBN 978-0-691-00684-0.
  - [15] *The Catholic Encyclopedia: An International Work of Reference on the Constitution, Doctrine, Discipline, and History of the Catholic Church*. Robert Appleton Company. 1912. p. 170.
  - [16] Hamilton, Janet; Hamilton, Bernard; Stoyanov, Yuri (1998). *Christian Dualist Heresies in the Byzantine World, C. 650-c. 1450: Selected Sources*. Manchester University Press. pp. 1–2. ISBN 978-0-7190-4765-7.
  - [17] Chidester, David (2001). *Christianity: A Global History*. HarperCollins. pp. 266–268. ISBN 978-0-06-251770-8.
  - [18] Etter, Christopher. A Study of Qualitative Non-Pluralism. iUniverse Inc. P. 59-60. ISBN 0-595-39312-8.
  - [19] Fowler, Jeaneane D. Perspectives of Reality: An Introduction to the Philosophy of Hinduism. Sussex Academic Press. P. 340-344. ISBN 1-898723-93-1.
  - [20] Haney, p. 17.
  - [21] Isaac, p. 339.
  - [22] Haney, p. 42.
  - [23] Isaac, p. 342.
  - [24] Leaman, p. 68.
  - [25] Leaman, p. 248.
- “Dualism and Mind” . *Internet Encyclopedia of Philosophy*.
  - *Dictionary of the History of ideas: Dualism in Philosophy and Religion*

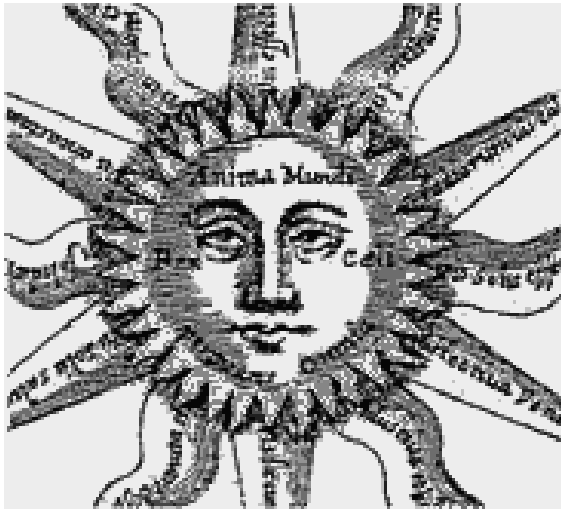
## 11.14 References

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## 11.15 External links

- Duality entry in the *UCLA Encyclopedia of Egyptology*
- Dualism at PhilPapers
- “Dualism” . *Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy*.
- Dualism at the Indiana Philosophy Ontology Project

# Panpsychism



*Illustration of the Neoplatonic concept of the **World Soul** emanating from **The Absolute***

In **philosophy**, **panpsychism** is the view that consciousness, mind or soul (**psyche**) is a universal and primordial feature of all things. Panpsychists see themselves as minds in a world of mind.

Panpsychism is one of the oldest philosophical theories, and has been ascribed to philosophers like **Thales**, **Parmenides**, **Plato**, **Averroes**, **Spinoza**, **Leibniz** and **William James**. Panpsychism can also be seen in ancient philosophies such as **Stoicism**, **Taoism**, **Vedanta** and **Mahayana Buddhism**. During the 19th century, panpsychism was the default theory in **philosophy of mind**, but it saw a decline during the middle years of the 20th century with the rise of **logical positivism**.\*[1]\*[2] The recent interest in the **hard problem of consciousness** has revived interest in panpsychism.\*[1]

## 12.1 Etymology

The term “panpsychism” has its origins with the Greek term *pan* (πᾶν: “all, everything, whole”) and *psyche* (ψυχή: “soul, mind”) as the unifying center of the mental life of us humans and other living creatures.”\*[3] *Psyche* comes from the Greek word ψύχω (*psukhō*, “I

blow” ) and can mean life, soul, mind, spirit, heart and 'life-breath'. The use of *psyche* is controversial due to it being synonymous with *soul*, a term usually taken to have some sort of supernatural quality; more common terms now found in the literature include **mind**, **mental properties**, mental aspect, and **experience**.

## 12.2 History

### 12.2.1 Ancient philosophy



Two **iwakura** —a rock where a *kami* or spirit is said to reside in the religion of *Shinto*.

Early forms of panpsychism can be found in pre-modern animistic beliefs in religions such as Shinto, Taoism, Paganism and shamanism. Panpsychist views are also a staple theme in pre-Socratic Greek philosophy.\*[1] According to Aristotle, Thales (c. 624 – 545 BCE) the first Greek philosopher, posited a theory which held “that everything is full of gods.”\*[4] Thales believed that this was demonstrated by magnets. This has been interpreted as a panpsychist doctrine.\*[1] Other Greek thinkers that have been associated with Panpsychism include Anaxagoras (who saw the underlying principle or arche as nous or mind), Anaximenes (who saw the arche as pneuma or spirit) and Heraclitus (who said “The thinking faculty is common to all” ).\*[5]

Plato argues for Panpsychism in his *Sophist*, in which he writes that all things participate in the **form** of Being and that it must have a psychic aspect of mind and soul (psyche).<sup>[5]</sup> In the *Philebus* and *Timaeus*, Plato argues for the idea of a world soul or **anima mundi**. According to Plato:

This world is indeed a living being endowed with a soul and intelligence ... a single visible living entity containing all other living entities, which by their nature are all related.<sup>[6]</sup>

Stoicism developed a cosmology which held that the natural world was infused with a divine fiery essence called **Pneuma**, which was directed by a universal intelligence called **Logos**. The relationship of the individual Logos of beings with the universal Logos was a central concern of the Roman Stoic **Marcus Aurelius**. The *Metaphysics* of Stoicism was based on Hellenistic philosophies such as Neoplatonism and Gnosticism also made use of the Platonic idea of the *Anima mundi*.

## 12.2.2 Renaissance

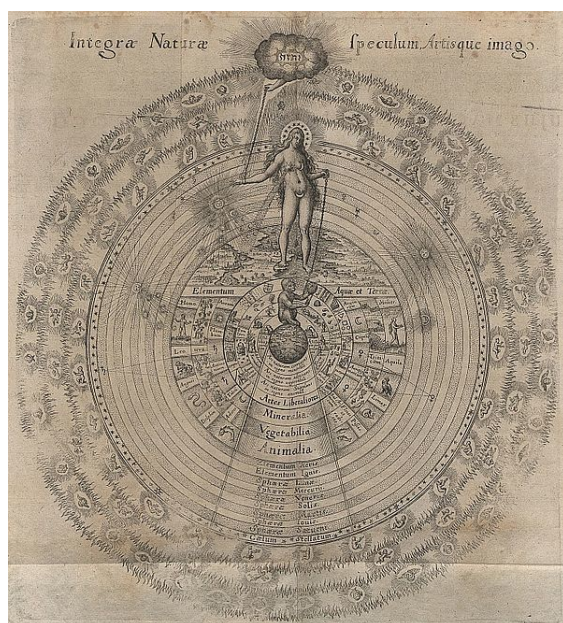


Illustration of the Cosmic order by Robert Fludd, the *World Soul* is depicted as a woman.

After the closing of **Plato's Academy** by the Emperor Justinian in 529 CE, Neoplatonism declined. Though there were mediaeval Christian thinkers who ventured what might be called panpsychist ideas (such as **John Scotus Eriugena**), it was not a dominant strain in Christian thought. In the Italian Renaissance, however, Panpsychism enjoyed something of an intellectual revival, in the thought of figures such as **Gerolamo Cardano**, **Bernardino Telesio**, **Francesco Patrizi**, **Giordano Bruno**,

and **Tommaso Campanella**. Cardano argued for the view that soul or anima was a fundamental part of the world and Patrizi introduced the actual term “panpsychism” into the philosophical vocabulary. According to Giordano Bruno: “There is nothing that does not possess a soul and that has no vital principle.”<sup>[5]</sup> Platonist ideas like the **anima mundi** also resurfaced in the work of esoteric thinkers like **Paracelsus**, **Robert Fludd** and **Cornelius Agrippa**.

## 12.2.3 Modern philosophy

In the 17th century, two rationalists can be said to be panpsychists, **Baruch Spinoza** and **Gottfried Leibniz**.<sup>[1]</sup> In Spinoza's monism, the one single infinite and eternal substance was “God, or Nature” (*Deus sive Natura*) which has the aspects of mind (thought) and matter (extension). Leibniz' view is that there are an infinite number of absolutely simple mental substances called **monads** which make up the fundamental structure of the universe. The Idealist philosophy of **George Berkeley** is also a form of pure panpsychism and technically all idealists can be said to be panpsychists by default.<sup>[1]</sup>

In the 19th century, Panpsychism was at its zenith. Philosophers like **Arthur Schopenhauer**, **C.S. Peirce**, **Josiah Royce**, **William James**, **Eduard von Hartmann**, **F.C.S. Schiller**, **Ernst Haeckel** and **William Kingdon Clifford** as well as psychologists like **Gustav Fechner**, **Wilhelm Wundt** and **Rudolf Hermann Lotze** all promoted Panpsychist ideas.<sup>[1]</sup>

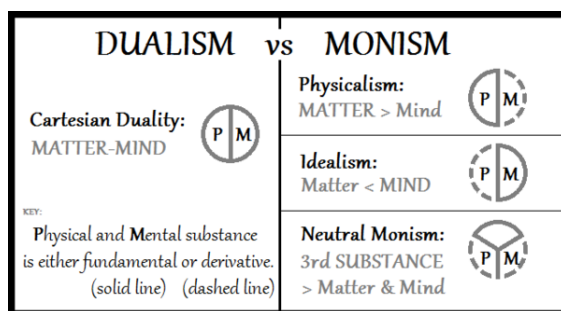
Arthur Schopenhauer argued for a two-sided view of reality which was both **Will** and **Representation** (*Vorstellung*). According to Schopenhauer: “All ostensible mind can be attributed to matter, but all matter can likewise be attributed to mind”.

**Josiah Royce**, the leading American absolute idealist held that reality was a “world self”, a conscious being that comprised everything, though he didn't necessarily attribute mental properties to the smallest constituents of mentalistic “systems”. The American Pragmatist philosopher **Charles Sanders Peirce** espoused a sort of Psycho-physical **Monism** which the universe as suffused with mind which he associated with spontaneity and freedom. Following **Pierce**, **William James** also espoused a form of panpsychism.<sup>[7]</sup> In his lecture notes, James wrote:

Our only intelligible notion of an object *in itself* is that it should be an object *for itself*, and this lands us in panpsychism and a belief that our physical perceptions are effects on us of 'psychical' realities<sup>[5]</sup>

In 1893, **Paul Carus** proposed his own philosophy similar to panpsychism known as 'panbiotism', which he defined





A diagram with neutral monism compared to Cartesian dualism, physicalism and idealism.

as “everything is fraught with life; it contains life; it has the ability to live.” \* [8]

In the 20th century, the most significant proponent of the Panpsychist view is arguably Alfred North Whitehead (1861-1947). \* [1] Whitehead's ontology saw the basic nature of the world as made up of events and the process of their creation and extinction. These elementary events (which he called occasions) are in part mental. \* [1] According to Whitehead: “we should conceive mental operations as among the factors which make up the constitution of nature.” \* [5] Bertrand Russell's neutral monist views also tended towards panpsychism. \* [5]

The psychologist Carl Jung, who is known for his idea of the collective unconscious, wrote that “psyche and matter are contained in one and the same world, and moreover are in continuous contact with one another”, and that it was probable that “psyche and matter are two different aspects of one and the same thing”. \* [9] The psychologists James Ward and Charles Augustus Strong also endorsed variants of panpsychism. \* [10] \* [11] \* [12]

Sewall Wright endorsed a version of panpsychism. He believed that the birth of consciousness was not due to a mysterious property of increasing complexity, but rather an inherent property, therefore implying these properties were in the most elementary particles. \* [13]

### 12.2.4 Contemporary

The panpsychist doctrine has recently been making a comeback in the American philosophy of mind. Prominent defenders include Christian de Quincey, Leopold Stubenberg, David Ray Griffin, and David Skrbina. \* [1] In 1990, the physicist David Bohm published a paper named “A New theory of the relationship of mind and matter” promoting a panpsychist theory of consciousness based on Bohm's interpretation of quantum mechanics. Bohm has a number of followers among philosophers of mind both in United States (e.g. Quentin Smith) and internationally (e.g. Paavo Pylkkänen). In the United Kingdom the case for panpsychism has been made in recent decades by Galen Strawson, \* [14] Gregg Rosenberg and Timothy Sprigge.

In the philosophy of mind, panpsychism is one possible solution to the so-called **hard problem of consciousness**. \* [15] The doctrine has also been applied in the field of environmental philosophy through the work of Australian philosopher Freya Mathews. \* [16] David Chalmers has provided a sympathetic account of it in *The Conscious Mind* (1996). In addition, neuroscientist Christof Koch has proposed a “scientifically refined version” of panpsychism. \* [17]

## 12.3 Arguments for

### 12.3.1 Non-emergentism

The problems found with **emergentism** are often cited by panpsychists as grounds to reject **physicalism**. This argument can be traced back to the Ancient Greek philosopher Parmenides, who argued that *ex nihilo nihil fit* — nothing comes from nothing and thus the mental cannot arise from the non-mental.

In his 1979 article *Panpsychism*, Thomas Nagel tied panpsychism to the failure of emergentism to deal with metaphysical relation: “There are no truly emergent properties of complex systems. All properties of complex systems that are not relations between it and something else derive from the properties of its constituents and their effects on each other when so combined.” \* [1] Thus he denies that mental properties can arise out of complex relationships between physical matter. Opposing Nagel, emergentist philosophers Roberto Mangabeira Unger in *The Religion of The Future* and Alexander Bard & Jan Söderqvist in *Syntheism - Creating God in The Internet Age* have argued that the reality of time enables complex systems to have truly emergent (as in irreversible and irreproducible) properties, thereby replacing any need for panpsychism with a chronocentric, strong emergentism.

### 12.3.2 Evolutionary

The most popular empirically based argument for panpsychism stems from **Darwinism** and is a form of the non-emergence argument. This argument begins with the assumption that **evolution** is a process that creates complex systems out of pre-existing properties but yet cannot make “entirely novel” properties. \* [1] William Kingdon Clifford argued that:

[...] we cannot suppose that so enormous a jump from one creature to another should have occurred at any point in the process of evolution as the introduction of a fact entirely different and absolutely separate from the physical fact. It is impossible for anybody to point out the particular place in the line of descent where that event can be supposed to have taken

place. The only thing that we can come to, if we accept the doctrine of evolution at all, is that even in the very lowest organism, even in the Amoeba which swims about in our own blood, there is something or other, inconceivably simple to us, which is of the same nature with our own consciousness [...]\*[18]

### 12.3.3 Thomas Nagel

In his book titled *Mortal Questions*, Thomas Nagel defines panpsychism as, “the view that the basic physical constituents of the universe have mental properties,” \*[19] effectively claiming the panpsychist thesis to be a type of property dualism. Nagel argues that panpsychism follows from four premises:

- (1) “Material composition” , or commitment to materialism.
- (2) “Non-reductionism” , or the view that mental properties cannot be reduced to physical properties.
- (3) “Realism” about mental properties.
- (4) “Non-emergence” , or the view that “there are no truly emergent properties of complex systems” .

Nagel notes that new physical properties are discovered through explanatory inference from known physical properties; following a similar process, mental properties would seem to derive from properties of matter not included under the label of “physical properties” , and so they must be additional properties of matter. Also, he argues that, “the demand for an account of how mental states necessarily appear in physical organisms cannot be satisfied by the discovery of uniform correlations between mental states and physical brain states.” \*[20] Furthermore, Nagel argues mental states are real by appealing to the inexplicability of subjective experience, or *qualia*, by physical means.

### 12.3.4 Quantum physics

Philosophers such as Alfred North Whitehead have drawn on the indeterminacy observed by quantum physics to defend panpsychism. A similar line of argument has been repeated subsequently by a number of thinkers including the physicist David Bohm, anesthesiologist Stuart Hameroff and philosophers such as Quentin Smith, Paavo Pylkkänen, Shan Gao,\*[21] and David Chalmers who, in his more recent work, has revisited his formerly negative views concerning quantum-theories of consciousness, and expressed sympathy towards the idea that consciousness be identified with the collapse of the wave-function. The advocates of panpsychist quantum con-

sciousness theories see quantum indeterminacy and informational but non-causal relations between quantum elements as the key to explaining consciousness.\*[1] Recent work on this approach has been also undertaken by William Lycan (1996) and Michael Lockwood (1991).

### 12.3.5 Intrinsic nature

These arguments are based on the idea that everything must have an intrinsic nature. They argue that while the objects studied by physics are described in a dispositional way, these dispositions must be based on some non-dispositional intrinsic attributes, which Whitehead called the “mysterious reality in the background, intrinsically unknowable” .\*[1] While we have no way of knowing what these intrinsic attributes are like, we can know the intrinsic nature of conscious experience which possesses irreducible and intrinsic characteristics. Arthur Schopenhauer argued that while the world appears to us as representation, there must be 'an object that grounds' representation, which he called the 'inner essence' (*das innere Wesen*) and 'natural force' (*Naturkraft*), which lies outside of what our understanding perceives as natural law.\*[22]

Philosophers such as Galen Strawson, Roger Penrose (1989), John Searle (1991), Thomas Nagel (1979, 1986, 1999) and Noam Chomsky (1999) have said that a revolutionary change in physics may be needed to solve the problem of consciousness.\*[1] Galen Strawson has also called for a revised “realistic physicalism” arguing that “the experiential considered specifically as such —the portion of reality we have to do with when we consider experiences specifically and solely in respect of the experiential character they have for those who have them as they have them —that ‘just is’ physical” .\*[1]

## 12.4 Arguments against

One criticism of panpsychism is the simple lack of evidence that the physical entities have any mental attributes. John Searle states that panpsychism is an “absurd view” and that thermostats lack “enough structure even to be a remote candidate for consciousness” (Searle, 1997, p. 48).

Physicalists also could argue against panpsychism by denying proposition (2) of Nagel's argument. If mental properties are reduced to physical properties of a physical system, then it does not follow that all matter has mental properties: it is in virtue of the structural or functional organization of the physical system that the system can be said to have a mind, not simply that it is made of matter. This is the common Functionalist position. This view allows for certain man-made systems that are properly organized, such as some computers, to be said to have minds. This may cause problems when (4) is taken into account. Also, *qualia* seem to undermine the reduction

of mental properties to brain properties.

Some have argued that the only properties shared by all *qualia* are that they are not precisely *describable*, and thus are of *indeterminate* meaning within any philosophy which relies upon precise definition according to these critics (that is, it tends to presuppose a definition for mentality without describing it in any real detail). The need to define better the terms used within the thesis of panpsychism is recognized by panpsychist David Skrbina,\*[23] and he resorts to asserting some sort of hierarchy of mental terms to be used. This is motivation to argue for panexperientialism rather than panpsychism, since only the most fundamental meaning of mind is what is present in all matter, namely, subjective experience.

The panpsychist answers both these challenges in the same way: we already know what *qualia* are through direct, introspective apprehension; and we likewise know what conscious mentality is by virtue of being conscious. For someone like Alfred North Whitehead, third-person description takes second place to the intimate connection between every entity and every other which is, he says, the very fabric of reality. To take a mere *description* as having primary reality is to commit the "fallacy of misplaced concreteness".

One response is to separate the *phenomenal*, non-cognitive aspects of consciousness—particularly *qualia*, the essence of the *hard problem of consciousness*—from cognition. Thus panpsychism is transformed into panexperientialism. However, this strategy of division generates problems of its own: what is going on causally in the head of someone who is thinking—cognitively of course—about their *qualia*?

## 12.5 In relation to other metaphysical positions

Panpsychism can be understood as related to a number of other metaphysical positions.

### 12.5.1 Idealism

Panpsychism agrees with *idealism* that in a sense everything is mental, but whereas idealism treats most things as *mental content* or ideas, panpsychism treats them as *mind-like*, in some sense, and as having their own reality. Also, in contrast to many forms of idealism, it holds that there is for all minds, there is a single, external, spatio-temporal world.

In contrast to "idealism", as this term is often used, panpsychism is not a doctrine of the unreality of the spatio-temporal world perceived through the senses, or its reduction to mere "ideas" in the human or divine mind. The constituents of this world are, for panpsychists, just as real as human minds or as any mind. Indeed, they are

minds, though, in large part, of an extremely low, subhuman order. Thus panpsychism is panpsychical realism; realistic both in the sense of admitting the reality of nature, and in the sense of avoiding an exaggerated view of the qualities of its ordinary constituents. "Souls" may be very humble sorts of entities—for example, the soul of a frog—and panpsychists usually suppose that multitudes of units of nature are on a much lower level of psychic life even than that.\*[24]

### 12.5.2 Dualism

Panpsychists and dualists agree that mental properties cannot be reduced to physical properties. The difference is that dualists consider mental and physical properties to be *qualitatively* different, to belong to different categories with virtually nothing in common (for instance, Descartes' characterisation of matter and mind as "extension" and "thought"), whereas panpsychists view physical properties as lesser *quantities* of mental properties. For instance, a panpsychist would interpret the ability of a stone to move under an impact to be a highly diminished form of sensitivity, with no element of volition. This distinction also separates *dual aspect theory* from panpsychism: although dual aspect theorists can agree with panpsychists that everything has some mental properties, they also hold that everything has some physical properties, whereas panpsychists hold that physical properties *are* (lessened) mental properties.

### 12.5.3 Neutral monism

There are also varieties of *monism* that don't presuppose (like materialism and idealism do) that mind and matter are fundamentally separable. An example is *neutral monism* first introduced by Spinoza and later propounded by William James. Neutral monism is often coupled with dual aspect theory which maintains that mental and physical are two perspectives on a reality that is neither mental nor physical. Panpsychism, on the other hand, holds that the physical is the (attenuated) mental.

### 12.5.4 Physicalism and materialism

*Reductive physicalism*, a form of *monism*, is normally assumed to be incompatible with panpsychism. *Materialism*, if held to be distinct from physicalism, is compatible with panpsychism insofar as mental properties are attributed to physical matter, which is the only basic substance.

### 12.5.5 Holism

Panpsychism is related to the more holistic view that the whole *Universe* is an organism that possesses a mind

(cosmic consciousness). It is claimed to be distinct from animism or hylozoism, which hold that all things have a soul or are alive, respectively. Gustav Theodor Fechner claimed in “Nanna” and “Zend-Avesta” that the Earth is a living organism whose parts are the people, the animals and the plants.

Panpsychism, as a view that the universe has “universal consciousness”, is shared by some forms of religious thought such as theosophy, pantheism, cosmotheism, non-dualism, new age thought and panentheism. The hundredth monkey effect exemplifies the threshold for this applied cosmic consciousness. The Tiantai Buddhist view is that “when one attains it, all attain it” . \* [25]

### 12.5.6 Hylopathism

Hylopathism argues for a similarly universal attribution of sentience to matter. Few writers would advocate a hylopathic materialism, although the idea is not new; it has been formulated as “whatever underlies consciousness in a material sense, i.e., whatever it is about the brain that gives rise to consciousness, must necessarily be present to some degree in any other material thing” . A compound state of mind does not consist of compounded psychic atoms. The concept of awareness “being in itself” allows for the idea of self-aware matter. Attempts have been made to conceptualize this primitive level of existence prior to associative learning and memory. In the way that the collection of self-aware matter constitutes a cognitive being, the collection of cognitive beings as a conglomerate entity, reflects panpsychism. Consciousness was not “nascent” but emergent due to a lack of abandon during the evolution of material awareness. \* [26]

Similar ideas have been attributed to Australian philosopher David Chalmers, who assumes that consciousness is a fundamental feature of the Universe, what he refers to as the First Datum in the study of the mind. In the practice of non-reductionism this feature may not be attributable to any base monad but instead radically emergent on the level of physical complexity at which it demonstrates itself. Complex elegance is the further development of awareness that is self-aware. This we can call “post-intelligence” where “intelligence” is simple processing. The element of superiority might be that the post-intelligence is proto-experiential. These phenomenal properties are called “the internal aspects of information” . \* [26]:162–170

### 12.5.7 Emergentism

No form of panpsychism attributes full, human-style consciousness to the fundamental constituents of the universe, therefore all versions need a certain amount of emergence—that is, *weak emergence*, in which more sophisticated versions of basic properties emerge at a higher level. No version of panpsychism requires *strong emer-*

*gence*, in which high-level properties do not have any low-level precursors or basis, and instead emerge “from nothing” . Indeed, avoidance of strong emergentism is one of the motivations for panpsychism, while strong emergentism, based on the reality of time, is the major argument against panpsychism.

## 12.6 Panexperientialism

“Panexperientialism” (or “panprotopsychism” ), and “panprotoexperientialism” are related concepts. Panexperientialism is associated with the philosophies of Charles Hartshorne and Alfred North Whitehead, although the term itself was invented by David Ray Griffin in order to distinguish the process philosophical view from other varieties of panpsychism.

Whitehead's metaphysics incorporated a scientific worldview similar to Einstein's theory of relativity into the development of his philosophical system. His process philosophy argues that the fundamental elements of the universe are “occasions of experience,” which can together create something as complex as a human being. This experience is not consciousness; there is no mind-body duality under this system, since mind is seen as a particularly developed kind of experience. Whitehead was not a subjective idealist, and while his occasions of experience (or “actual occasions” ) resemble Leibniz's monads, they are described as constitutively interrelated. He embraced panentheism, with God encompassing all occasions of experience and yet still transcending them. Whitehead believed that these occasions of experience are the smallest element in the universe—even smaller than subatomic particles.

Panprotoexperientialism is a theory found in the works of Gregg Rosenberg. For his part, process philosopher Michel Weber argues for a pancreativism. \* [27]

The ecological phenomenology carefully developed in the writings of the American cultural ecologist and philosopher, David Abram, is often (and quite appropriately) described as a form of panexperientialism, \* [28] \* [29] as is the “poetic biology” developed by Abram's close associate, the German biologist Andreas Weber. \* [30]

## 12.7 In eastern philosophy

According to Graham Parkes: “Most of traditional Chinese, Japanese and Korean philosophy would qualify as panpsychist in nature. For the philosophical schools best known in the west —Neo-confucianism and Japanese Buddhism—the world is a dynamic force field of energies known as *qi* or *busho* (Buddha nature) and classifiable in western terms as *psychophysical*.” \* [31]





*In the art of the Japanese rock garden, the artist must be aware of the rocks' "ishigokoro" ('heart', or 'mind')* \* [31]

### 12.7.1 East Asian Buddhism

According to D. S. Clarke, panpsychist and panexperientialist aspects can be found in the Huayan and Tiantai (Jpn. Tendai) Buddhist doctrines of Buddha nature, which was often attributed to inanimate objects such as lotus flowers and mountains. \* [32] Tiantai patriarch Zhanran argued that “even non-sentient beings have Buddha nature.” \* [31]

Who, then, is “animate” and who “inanimate”? Within the assembly of the Lotus, all are present without division. In the case of grass, trees and the soil...whether they merely lift their feet or energetically traverse the long path, they will all reach Nirvana. \* [31]

The Tiantai school was transmitted to Japan by Saicho, who spoke of the “buddha-nature of trees and rocks” . \* [31]

According to the 9th-century Shingon Buddhist thinker Kukai, the Dharmakaya is nothing other than the physical universe and natural objects like rocks and stones are included as part of the supreme embodiment of the Buddha. \* [31] The Soto Zen master Dogen also argued for the universality of Buddha nature. According to Dogen, “fences, walls, tiles, and pebbles” are also “mind” (しん, *shin*). Dogen also argued that “insentient beings expound the teachings” and that the words of the eternal Buddha “are engraved on trees and on rocks . . . in fields and in villages” . This is the message of his “Mountains and Waters Sutra” (Sansui kyô). \* [31]

### 12.7.2 Dzogchen

According to a common misunderstanding, in the Buddhist Dzogchen tradition, particularly Dzogchen Semde or “mind series” the principal text of which is the Kulayarāja Tantra, there is nothing which is non-sentient, i.e. everything is sentient. Moreover, two of the English

scholars that opened the discourse of the Bardo literature of the Nyingma Dzogchen tradition, Evans-Wentz & Jung (1954, 2000: p. 10) specifically with their partial translation and commentary of the *Bardo Thodol* into the English language write of the “One Mind” (Tibetan: sems nyid gcig; Sanskrit: \*ekacittatva; \*ekacittata; where \* denotes a possible Sanskrit back-formation) thus:

The One Mind, as Reality, is the Heart which pulsates for ever, sending forth purified the blood-streams of existence, and taking them back again; the Great Breath, the Inscrutable Brahman, the Eternally Unveiled Mystery of the Mysteries of Antiquity, the Goal of all Pilgrimages, the End of all Existence. \* [33]

It should be borne in mind, that Evans-Wentz never studied the Tibetan language and that the lama who did the main translation work for him was of the Gelukpa Sect and is not known to have actually studied or practiced Dzogchen.

According to the translation with commentary, “Self-Liberation Through Seeing with Naked Awareness” , by John Myrdhin Reynolds, the phrase, “It is the single nature of mind which encompasses all of Samsara and Nirvana,” occurs only once in the text and it refers not to “some sort of Neo-Platonic hypostasis, a universal *Nous*, of which all individual minds are but fragments or appendages” , but to the teaching that, “whether one finds oneself in the state of Samsara or in the state of Nirvana, it is the nature of the mind which reflects with awareness all experiences, no matter what may be their nature.” This can be found in Appendix I, on pages 80–81. Reynolds elucidates further with the analogy of a mirror. To say that a single mirror can reflect ugliness or beauty, does not constitute an allegation that all ugliness and beauty is one single mirror.

## 12.8 See also

### Doctrines

- Anima Mundi
- Animism
- Emergentism
- Gaia hypothesis
- Holographic Universe
- Hylozoism
- Idealism
- Maya (illusion)

- Monadology
- Monistic idealism
- Mythopoeic thought
- Nous
- Pandeism
- Panexperientialism
- Pantheism
- Philosophy of Mind
- Pneuma
- Solipsism

## People

- Anaxagoras
- Mary Whiton Calkins
- Gustav Theodor Fechner
- Charles Hartshorne
- Heraclitus
- Gerardus Heymans
- William James
- Leibniz
- Friedrich Paulsen
- Plato
- Josiah Royce
- Schopenhauer
- Spinoza
- Galen Strawson
- Teilhard de Chardin
- Thales
- Alfred North Whitehead

## 12.9 Notes

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## 12.11 External links

- List of online classic papers on panpsychism
- Online papers on panpsychism, by various authors, compiled by David Chalmers
- Internet Encyclopedia of Philosophy - Panpsychism
- Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy - Panpsychism
- consciousnessentities.com - Philosophical Deadends - Panpsychism
- panpsychism.net Panpsychism and Pantheism (a good introduction by Ken Van Cleve)
- The Center for Process Studies (Whitehead and Panexperientialism)
- Panexperientialism Blog
- The Panpsychist Society
- The Metaphysics of Panpsychism
- Popper's Flawed Critique of Panpsychism (Neuroself Article)

## 12.10 Further reading

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RobertMfromLI, Puppyspencer, DARTH SIDIOUS 2, Pluemaster, Realizen, The Utahraptor, Woogee, RjwilmsiBot, Bento00, IANVS, Narcolepz, Onancastrovejano, Bhawani Gautam, Beyond My Ken, Jason Adkin, Wintonian, Piedude294, Salvio giuliano, Tesseract2, DASHBot, GusFoy, EmausBot, John of Reading, Orphan Wiki, WikitanvirBot, Atwar-withthem, Dr Aaij, Elusker, Surlyduff50, Icauna, Gfoley4, Nikolai Vex, Dominus Vobisdu, Zollerrria, Nuujinn, ScottyBerg, Griswaldo, Mastermike14, RA0808, RenamedUser01302013, Bt8257, Tommy2010, Crozier99, Wikipellii, Sheeana, Ornithikos, TeleComNasSpr-Ven, John Shandy, Thecheesykid, Italia2006, Werieth, JimGardnerUK, Kinsu08, D'oh!, Lee McLoughlin Leicester, PBS-AWB, Blizster, Somebodybiteme, Samurai3502, Akerans, Bradmst, Allforrous, PunkyMcPunkersen, Xabier Armendaritz, Iwanttoeditthish, Lusitanic rivallis azure, Empty Buffer, Andyman1125, Chewy.haley, WikipediaNaught, Wensei78, Hi im harry, Thepuddinmanmw2, Newport-negger, Everard Proudfoot, Elektrik Shoos, Rajpat 00, A930913, Bigguyonyourdoorstep, Manboychem, Aeonx, H3llBot, Wiooiw, As-dfh321, AtheismUK, Confession0791, Wikignome0530, Zap Rowsdower, Scifilosophy, Tacosaregawd, SpottyAppaloosa, FinalRapture, EricDolloff, Wayne Slam, WSUshober, Willlovesjennifer, Yt whitenine, MiniShello, Someone65, Cit helper, S189, Intelligentsock, Coast-erlover1994, AfricanAtheism, L Kensington, Hopetobecomedsaanudasa, 47SweetBirdofYouth85, Dante8, Jess, Wikiposter0123, Laco-brigo, Sailsbystars, Brockatista, FelixG1995, She11ypoo, Snowfairryjoy, Aldnonymous, ChuispastonBot, HareKrishnaPortal, Billy.brewster, AndyTheGrump, Gum375, Justice007, Robin Lionheart, ESC 2010, Megfrey, Kanishk.frn, Ferris42033, Teapeat, Sven Manguard, Vap-puri, DASHBotAV, Wikiwind, TravisMunson1993, Loldy6, Mjbmrbot, Socialservice, Planetescared, Tjham, Lignairg, Xanchester, Rememberway, ClueBot NG, Ruth-2013-enwiki, Zytigon, KarlKraft, Realthinker, Carbunkulous, Shiafreeziah, Macarenses, Yottamaster, Lmjhall, Joefromrandb, 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McKeown, Scientizzle, Buchanan-Hermit, Colak, Tazmaniacs, Kipala, Brennen, Gobonobo, Coredesat, Accurizer, NYCJosh, Green Giant, Stefan2, Clore, Llosoc, Cielomobile, Fjulle, Llamadog903, James745, Localist, Libertatia, N1h11, Ben Kidwell, Grumpyyoungman01, Smith609, Rehpotsirhc, Tasc, MTN~enwiki, Mr Stephen, Dominio~enwiki, Midnightblueowl, Ryulong, A Clown in the Dark, BwG~enwiki, Vanished User 03, Phuzion, Stephen B Streater, DabMachine, Hetar, Iridescent, AnarChrist, WGee, Joseph Solis in Australia, JoeBot, Theoldanarchist, Geoffg, Sam Clark, Twas Now, BlackFlag, Exander, Beno1000, CapitalR, Happy-melon, Cowdog, Captainj, Adambiswanger1, Linkspamremover, Cilencia, Tawkerbot2, Robgraham, Aardvark3, CalebNoble, Jkschroeder27, Xcentaur, Hayduke2000, Vargklo, Wolfdog, Planktonbot, CmdrObot, Pugsworth, Bobfrombrockley, Chrisbang, Van helsing, Blue-Haired Lawyer, Vision Thing, BeenAroundAWhile, Lighthead, THINMAN, Dgw, FlyingToaster, Lentower, Avillia, Moreschi, Neelix, Ken Gallager, Yopienso, Richard Keatinge, Karenjc, Skybon, Puckish boy, Gregbard, Hardys, Ninja Fred, Cydebot, Moussy~enwiki, Conversion script, Warhorus, CB319, Seanmwalsh10, Steel, Brillig20, Gogo Dodo, Travelbird, Matteredgy, Hebrides, ST47, Hughdbrown, Sylab, Sloth monkey, Synergy, Skittleys, Laurenticwave, Krator, Bigjake, Tawkerbot4, Doug Weller, Mooseofshadows, Bgamari, Omicronpersei8, Maziotis, Donnachadelong, Thijs!bot, Eprb123, Rhodog, Daniel, WakeUpAndLive, Headbomb, Afittillidie13, Skovoroda, Hephæstus@freeq.com, Hcobb, Philippe, MANiAC, Northumbrian, I already forgot, Pgage, Mentifisto, Hmrox, Tom dl, KrakatoaKatie, AntiVandalBot, Luna Santin, Carolmooredc, Quintote, Prolog, Kbthompson, WickedWanda, Feyenatic london, Lingeron, Modernist, Dylan Lake, Darklilac, John Stevenson, MECU, RedCoat10, Storkk, Blahblablahblablahblab, Uuu87, Steambadger, Beeboe, Sluzzelin, FreeJohnG, JAnDbot, Ristonet, Samar, Barek, Meatloafx, MER-C, Skomorokh, Dsp13, The Transhumanist, Nwe, Drowner, ...---...SOS, Nom de guerre, RubyQ, Andonic, Dcooper, Ekserevinitis, 100110100, GurchBot, Yill577, CapitalistAnarchist, Borchamps, TheIndividualist, Acroterion, Naval Scene, Mardavich, O-Boy, Magioladitis, EbonyTotem, NeilHynes, IndividualistAnarchist, Bongwarrior, VoABot II, Shrum72, Dekimasu, AtticusX, MastCell, Bugmenot42, OceanDepths, Praxeo, Isedeadfood, KingWen, Tito-, LibertyFirst, Soulbot, Bill j, Liberio, Steven Walling, That'sHot, DTC, WODUP, Glevorn, Whiskey Rebellion, Tonyfaull, SparrowsWing, Thunderhead~enwiki, Richard a b, NotACow, WhatamIdoing, JLMadrigrall, Indon, VegKilla, Sebaxxtian, MojoTas, MetsBot, Tins128, Gomm, Fang 23, Peemil, Anarcho-capitalism, Cander0000, Memotype, JaGa, Professor rat, Patstuart, TheEternalMan, Rickard Vogelberg, Cocytus, MartinBot, Jim Yar, Disquietude, Crvst, Revolution Guy, Niclisp, Panarchy, Rettetast, Ravichandar84, Doctors without suspenders, MeteorMaker, Imagination débridée, Wylve, R'n'B, CommonsDelinker, AlexiusHoratius, Per Hedetun, Francis Tyers, J.delanoy, Trusilver, Rohitj.iitk, Tlim7882, AstroHurricane001, Sideshow Bob, Uncle Dick, Gimsengbomb, PhilLiberty, Winder side, Galanskov, Laurusnobilis, Aqwis, Bot-Schaffer, AndrewFleming72, Elementart123, Anarcho Egoism, KesheR, Renamed user 5417514488, Coconut sprinkles, JayJasper, AntiSpamBot, Dogstar11, Plasticup, Vanished User 4517, Knight of BAWA, Topknot2, Belovedfreak, Lygophile, Drake Dun, SJP, Ontarioboy, Sugarbat, Babedacus, Nappyrash, Robertgreer, Doomsday28, Madhava 1947, Largoplazo, BrettAllen, Treisijs, Ghostbear616, WinterSpw, Scott Illini, Organ123, Andy Marchbanks, Harris88, Intangible2.0, Xiahou, Steel1943, Idioma-bot, WolfgangMoeseleier, Ottershrew, TeamZissou, Sam Blacketter, Meiskam, Elodoth, Malik Shabazz, Crimzonsol, VolkovBot, Areteichi, TreasuryTag, CWii, Thedjatclubrock, One Night In Hackney, Murderbike, Macedonian, Lear's Fool, Anna Quist, Kyle the bot, Randy6767, Αvcρyλiα, Caesaraix, Childhoodsend, TXiKiBoT, Rollo44, Tumbblingsky, Creagh~enwiki, Inkani, Andres rojas22, C.J. Griffin, Ocolon, Corvus cornix, Ctmt, Martin451, GlobeGores, Don4of4, Wassermann~enwiki, MercuryBot, PDFbot, Christopher Connor, StillTrill, Natg 19, Jeeny, Vert et Noir, Zweidinge, Mindgrime, Phttttt, Billinghamurst, Haseo9999, Jelly



FTW, Iflylow, SmileToday, Heliogabalus1, Dale R. Gowin, Thanatos666, GAPlauche, Doc James, AlleborgoBot, Nagy, Logan, Munci, Scottytwong, Anarchist92, Ptans, Etcetc, EmxBot, Sundiiiiiii, Givegains, Aunt Cudjoe, SieBot, 11thedition, JamesA, N-HH, Williamroy3, Ghimbouels, Lynch1989, Dawn Bard, Viskonsas, Teknolyze, Turkeyplucker, Alexbook, Peter cohen, Happysailor, Flyer22 Reborn, Chromaticity, Qst, Arbor to SJ, Ctmkeevlee, Hiddenfromview, Political Guru, Crashola, Oxymoron83, Lightmouse, KathrynLybarger, Manway, Signatory, ES Sage, Kumioko, Anarchocelt, Crashtip, Svick, Correogsk, Lranatunga, Msrasnw, Latics, The Four Deuces, Bjorn Martiz, Witchkraut, Thatotherdude, Huku-chan, Superbeecat, LM1973, Benny Boros, Efe, Denisarona, Piyushrajput, Korey Kaczynski, Extra Rock, I ate jelly, Operation Spooner, Troy 07, ImageRemovalBot, Freedom eagle, Martarius, ClueBot, SummerWithMorons, User-afw, Prebendclariion, JoshHeitzman, Father Inire, Mortimerghadibalo, Grawp-enwiki, Grawp the Giant-enwiki, Mgariss, Drmies, Tobito Kakashi, 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Marketerama, Ben Ben, Luckas-bot, Yobot, Granpuff, JJARichardson, Senator Palpatine, DarkBlackGod, Richard Blatant, Sageo, KamikazeBot, Eduen, Eric-Wester, AnomieBOT, Metalhead94, Rubinbot, 1exec1, IRP, Piano non troppo, Soxwon, Kingpin13, EryZ, SARAH-FANDRICKSDONGBAG, McNick, Materials scientist, E235, Citation bot, Brightgalrs, Bob Burkhardt, Eumolpo, Steppley, ArthurBot, Quebec99, Haemo123, Xqbot, Timir2, Spidern, 4twenty42o, ChildofMidnight, Birmdogs, Tomdo08, Dellant, Loveless, Srich32977, NeutralAndObjective, Alumnum, ProtectionTaggingBot, Omnipaedista, Atomela, SassoBot, Jadabocho, Costho, DASDBILL2, Rodentrance, Aurush kazemini, GhalyBot, Shadowjams, Joxemai, WebCiteBOT, Thatsrightthatsright, Viceroy489, Inctroman, Erik9, Daniel Prestwich, ThompsonFest, Attardi, Jackriter, FrescoBot, Nimloth250, LucienBOT, Paine Ellsworth, Bobby72, Bucktoothie, Grapenuts90, Part Time Security, Wobean, VertetNoir, Renamed user 832, L1ttleTr33, Rkr1991, Oashi, Xhaoz, Redrose64, DrillBot, Pinethicket, I dream of horses, HRoestBot, Abductive, Hard Sin, Jonesey95, Onthegogo, Gregpierce2, Abudhurr, Skyerise, A8UDI, Serols, Motorizer, Schonchin, Goalyoman, Tim1357, Risker (Anne Criske) is old & has gray hair & wears glasses. 16, TobeBot, Trappist the monk, Angelicapple, Lotje, Dasha14, Dinamik-bot, Vrenator, 777sms, C9cfute2wall, Dudephat, ASmallPatchOfShadow, Tbhotch, Bikepunk2, Mean as custard, Hellogoodbye96, TjBot, Alph Bot, MShabazz, Khin2718, Zujine, DASHBot, Irish South African, EmausBot, John of Reading, Nima1024, WikitanvirBot, Thomas.giovanni, JulesCollins, Darrennn, GoingBatty, ChihuahuaAssassin, Suckitman, Peacercay, RememberingLife, Modern inferno, Kaimakides, Weriet, Jjcasca, ZéroBot, Life in General, PBS-AWB, Josve05a, Tulandro, Bryce Carmony, Soyinchescott, Jonpatterns, Veikk0.ma, Cobaltcigs, Aecwriter, Anisincool, NewSunset, AManWithNoPlan, Jarodalien, Wayne Slam, MisterDub, Centographer, Dante8, Mayur, Noodleki, BarbaricSocialistZealots, ShylkaOleh, Casio565, ChuispastonBot, Tricee, Lovok Sovok, Herk1955, Rocketrod1960, Wilson5000, Mjbmrbot, Helpsome, Ohmyerica, ClueBot NG, Gareth Griffith-Jones, W.Kaleem, Smedifferentstuff, Jeekjeeks, Joefromrandb, Adamsk, Mikejamesshaw, BakuninGoldmanKropotkin, Floatjon, Delusion23, Primergrey, Mesoderm, Jogmiers, Kevin Gorman, Sk4rpHed1n, Widr, Jamesgumbi, PeterNader69, Helpful Pixie Bot, Tholme, Wbml058, Nashinton, Guest2625, Regulov, Stas-Adolf, Lowercase sigmabot, BG19bot, Pudding time, Johnkim100530, Prometheus' Successor, Graham11, Darkness Shines, Amp71, Anarchistfromdakota, Darenwithoner, Mark Arsten, Deathcoresniper, Nero1861, Shyguy76767, Altaïr, Postciv, Aranea Mortem, North911, Evidenceplease, Glacialfox, JPuglisi, Nferrara100, Conspersanza, Skatejunkie69, Ahwoooga, Anomnomious, Broadside Perceptor, Jakemartinov, David.moreno72, Liam987, StarryGrandma, Mimisqueeze, ChrisGualtieri, GoShow, Smartguysmarts, Dactarianou, Khazar2, Objective Reason, IjonTichyIjonTichy, Slotskyst, Spinazo, FoCuSandLeArN, Rothbardanswer, Webclient101, Charles Essie, Mogism, TheUnknownGuest, Retrospector87, Cerabot-enwiki, The Vintage Feminist, Lugia2453, John F. Lewis, Spamer2000, Gridzel, Helsabot, Redblackwritings, Epigenius, CreazyHorse36, CsDix, Ntipping polish, I am One of Many, Greybirch, Laplacetmat, Hendrick 99, Geofq, Cherubinirules, Smartmart27, Myconix, TracedInAir, AbigailBuccaneer, NickJagielski, PietjePPaulisme, XXxlmxXx, JoshuaChen, Keepsgames, JWNocis, Sam Sailor, Chrisluft, Anarcham, Reyduhad, Mabour, Mike Mike, Ghilan al-Dimashqi, Concorde-Mandalorian, Zozs, ComradeBlots, Monkbob, Zumoarirodoka, Filedelinkerbot, Vieque, Wmthor, U᠊ᠨᠠᠰᠤᠷᠠᠨ, IagoQnsi, AnarchyOrDie, Ephemeratta, Angelnh, Slimx7, Pariah24, Spumuq, CookieMonster755, Loraof, Leosylveste, Atvica, FivePillarPurist, HerrGeisterhuhnmann, Enlightened editor, Azealia911, DameCurieuse, KasparBot, DivermanAU, Oluwa2Chainz, Dean Striker, Kelsmcloughlin, Chrivacc, InternetArchiveBot, IWillBuildTheRoads, Frauemacht, GreenC bot, Jmcgnh, Marvellous Spider-Man, Siblings96, Bender the Bot, Zwobot64, EngvarB consistency, Coldwarkid, Wowononogo, Adrianos7, Wrenchy123, Ainsley1234, Aaliyah101312, S.D. McGee 123, Osobaukicu, Sylviasigh and Anonymous: 1662

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7804j, DoktorH, Ugog Nizdast, Aubreybardo, BrianPansky, Sizeofint, Caryvader, Crito10, Joebevo, Fantastiera, Wpaul1972, Vitahall, Two Moons Rising, GreenC bot, AlisterMcLeod, Dockabo and Anonymous: 168

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Jytdog, Pffhorrest, SwirlBoy39, Stickee, XF641D9K, Mzilhao, Hatsoff, Berman619, Ryan-Cross, Yaik9a, Spartan15DEMO, Addbot, JBSupreme, Willking1979, Some jerk on the Internet, Ben Sarbey, Yobmod, Avrillys, Spelling-Bot, Reidlophile, Ducio1234, With goodness in mind, Cst17, LokiiT, Nightingale12, MrOllie, Download, Glane23, Simeon24601, Zero no Kamen, AndersBot, Optimisticpizza, 5 albert square, Numbo3-bot, JacksSmirkingRevenge42, Tide rolls, ForesticPig, OIEnglish, Achilles last stand, Y73m09d11, Jarble, Meisam, Jiffy82, Luckas-bot, Granpuff, 2D, Fraggel81, Chris Corvette, Taxisfolder, IW.HG, Eduen, Marshall Williams2, WvT-enwiki, AnomieBOT, Rubinbot, Jim1138, IRP, Xorou, Darolew, Flewis, Mann jess, Citation bot, Bob Burkhardt, I c thefunny side, ArthurBot, Karlisr, Priscilla new, LombrizFeliz, Apothecia, Hello from sweden, Intrinsic3141, KuRiZu, Dmitri Molotov, Gap9551, Violent Pacifist, GrouchoBot, Abce2, Timeforedits, Omnipaedista, Stormshade666, Mort42, Mysteriumen, RibotBOT, 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