

Sparks in the Classroom

Creativity in Philosophy and Religious Studies

Newington College



Discover
what's possible



**Religious Education has no place in a
modern curriculum.**

Do you agree? Why or why not?



Religious Education in the UK

‘More than half of secondary school pupils now choose Religious Education as a GCSE subject, and for two consecutive years it’s been the fastest growing subject at AS level (G. Haig, *The Guardian* Newspaper, 12/12/06)

‘The relentless growth of Religious Education as a choice for GCSE students underlines the importance of investing adequate resources and time in its teaching. **Young people are clamouring for a deeper understanding of religious perspectives** on issues of the day and how moral and ethical questions are considered by the major faiths ... Twelve years of organic growth in student numbers cannot be ignored.’ (N. McKemey, *Church of England Newspaper*, 24/8/10)

A Letter from a Concentration Camp Survivor

Dear Teacher,

I am a survivor of a concentration camp. My eyes saw what no man should witness: Gas chambers built by learned engineers. Children poisoned by educated physicians. Infants killed by trained nurses. Women and babies shot and burned by high school and college graduates. So I am suspicious of education. My request is: Help your students become human. Your efforts must never produce learned monsters, skilled psychopaths, educated Eichmanns. Reading, writing, arithmetic are important only if they serve to make our children more human.

PRS explores different responses to the question of what it means to be human (i.e., different 'world-views').

‘RE is concerned with ultimate values – specifically the significance of the human individual in the cosmos. What is a person? What is our perception of the worth of the individual based on? With what ends in view should a person live?’
(Brian V. Hill, *Exploring Religion in School*, p.45)

‘RE ... doesn’t merely involve the transmission of an inherited body of content... It is an attempt to persuade students to think through basic questions of personal meaning and to examine their own life purposes.’ (Ibid., p.56)

Philosophy and Religious Studies

- 'Non-confessional'
- Starts from questions / concepts / philosophical themes
 - a 'personal search' approach (*Kirkwood*)
- An exploration of worldviews, religious and non-religious
- Building literacy (including 'religious literacy' – *Wright*)
- Inter-disciplinary
- Emphasis on critical and creative thinking
- Emotional intelligence
- Enquiry-based
- Activity-centred

The Nature of the Subject

1. A descriptive examination of religions and their phenomena (largely the approach advocated by the Toledo Report).
2. As a vehicle to promote personal search (e.g., Robert Kirkwood)
3. As the critical examination of truth claims in religion and ethics (e.g., Andrew Wright)
4. As a post-modern vehicle for constructing your own meaning in life (e.g., Clive Erricker)
5. Confessional / catechetical – faith formation within a particular religious tradition

These aims need not be mutually exclusive.

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‘Personal Search’

Begins with issues and themes with which students can identify
– What is a good life? Are science and religion compatible? Can I prove the existence of God? Why is there suffering in the world? What do we mean by ‘right’ and ‘wrong’?

Explores religious and non-religious responses to these questions

Draw insights from philosophy, psychology, literature, film and popular culture

Creating a relationship between the content of PRS and the personal existential concerns of students

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World Views


‘A world view is a set of assumptions which we hold about the basic make-up of our world’ (James Sire)



Scientism, Relativism, Materialism, Consumerism, Utilitarianism ... theism, Buddhism ...

The implications of such world-views. Students become more critically aware of the values that surround them and see the possibility of learning from other visions of reality.

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The PRS Curriculum – A Basic Overview

Year 7 – Me, You and the Universe

Who am I? (physical, mental, emotional, spiritual); Myself and others; Myself and the universe (ultimate questions and concepts of God)

Year 8 – Arguments about the existence of God; Science and Religion: Allies or Enemies?

Year 9 – What is a good life? The Philosophy of Happiness; Evil, Suffering and Religion

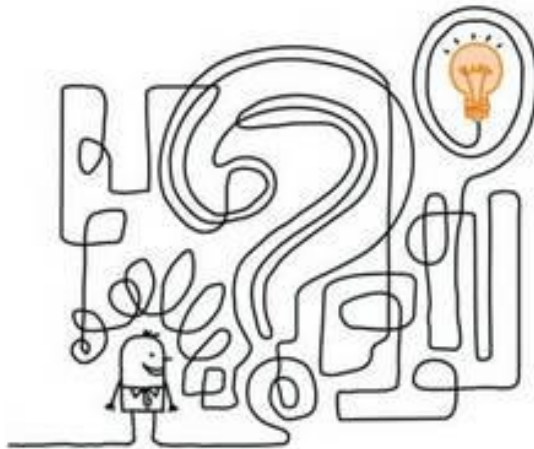
Year 10 – Ethics in the 21st Century (Introduction to ethical theory and applied ethics); Critical Thinking

Elective courses: Year 8 Philosophy; IB Philosophy; HSC Studies of Religion



Centre for Ethics

The Centre for Ethics at Newington College is a forum for students, teachers, parents and the wider community, to engage in discussion of contemporary moral issues, beliefs and values.



Through its public lectures, workshops and conferences, the Centre aims to promote critical and creative thinking, inter-cultural understanding and serious engagement with the moral issues facing young Australians in the 21st century.

On this page

[Public Lecture Program 2012](#)



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Religious Studies
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9566 9302

Want to know
more about
Newington's
Centre for
Ethics?

Download the 2012
Centre for Ethics
brochure [here](#) for
more information

[Click here](#)

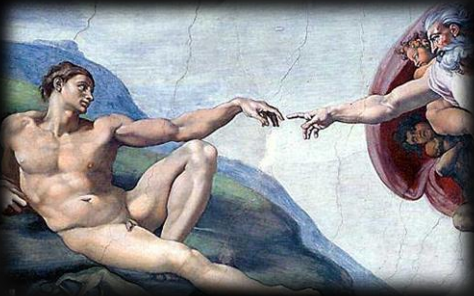
Dr Tanveer Ahmed
Julian Burnside QC
Professor Philip Cam
Dr Leslie Cannold
Rev Tim Costello
Ven Robina Courtin
Annabel Crabb
Nick Farr-Jones
Professor Jake Lynch
Dr Hugh Mackay
Dr Rod Pattenden
Dr David Seedhouse
Professor Peter Singer
Mark Tedeschi QC
Dr Peter Vardy



Year 8 Philosophy & Religious Studies

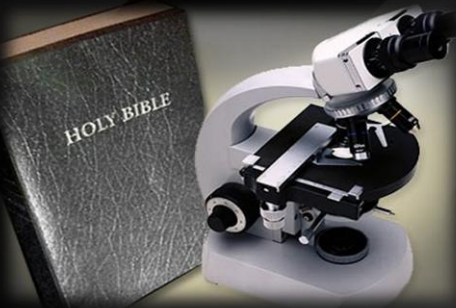


- Introduction to Critical Thinking



- Unit 1

Arguments about the Existence of God
Aquinas, Paley, Feuerbach, Pascal



- Unit 2

Science & Religion: Allies or Enemies?



- 1: Everything in the universe has a cause
 - 2: There must be a first cause
 - 3: The first cause must be uncaused
- C: This 'First Cause' must be God**



1. Which of the objects in the boxes do you think has...

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What's in the mystery box?

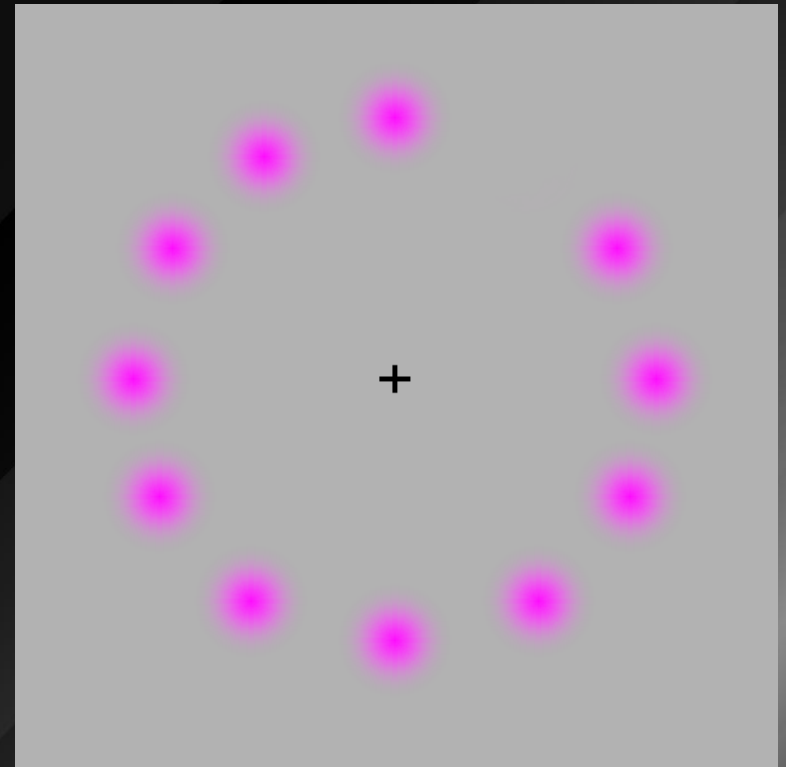
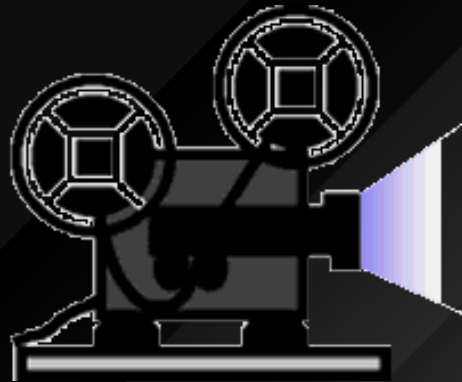


See Jones, Cardinal & Hayward, *Philosophy of Religion*
(Hodder Murray, 2005), p.66

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Feuerbach: God is a
projection of the mind



GOD

love

intelligence

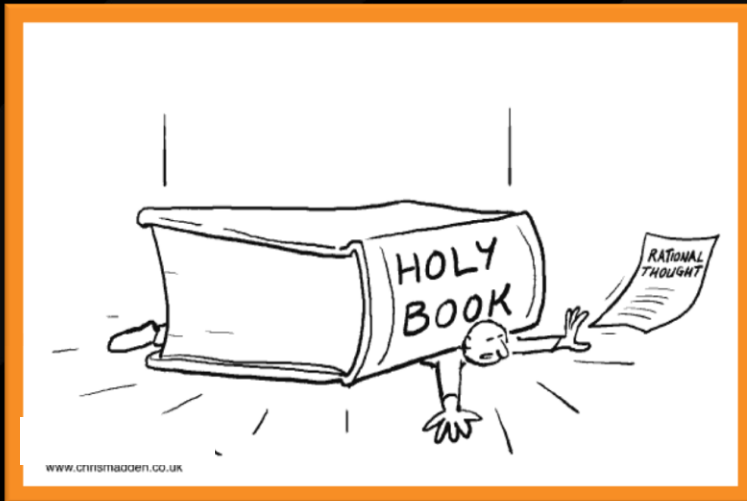
goodness

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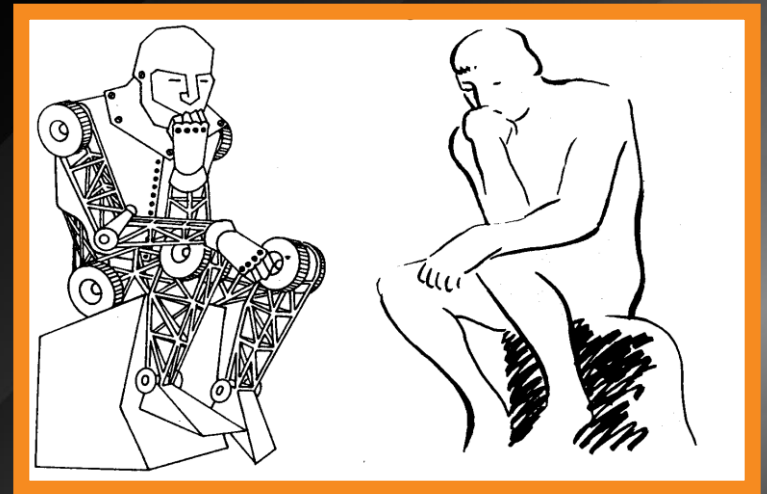
Film Study





Religious fundamentalism

the belief that **religion** offers SUFFICIENT explanations for the universe



Scientific fundamentalism

the belief that **science** offers SUFFICIENT explanations for the universe



Why did the chicken cross the road?

1. To get to the other side
 2. Because it was stapled to the hedgehog
 3. Because there were a series of muscular contractions and relaxations acting as a system of hinged bony joints
 4. To every action there is an equal and opposite reaction
 5. Because it felt like it!
 6. I don't know
 7. Because it was Wednesday
 8. Because the farmer showed it some food
 9. Because it is part of God's plan
- a. Theological
 - b. Biological
 - c. Human decision
 - d. Unknown
 - e. Physics
 - f. Instinctive
 - g. No choice
 - h. Chicken's choice

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Word Game

Melbourne

City
Here
Victoria
Australia
conference

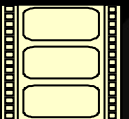
Rules:

You cannot say :

- any of the words / parts of words on the card
- 'Sounds like', 'rhymes with', etc.

You cannot:

- mime, point, or use any non-verbal communication





The story of King Midas



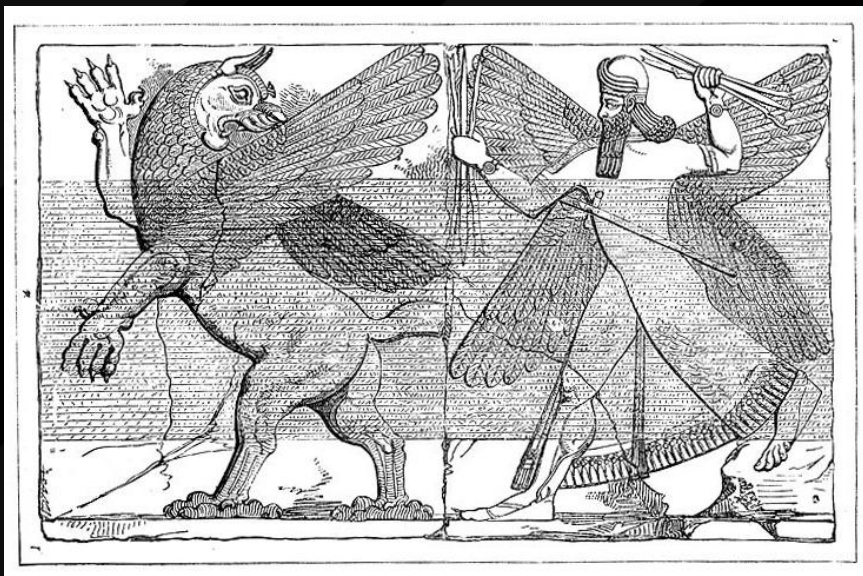
Myth



Myth as untruth



Myth as vehicle for truth



The Babylonian Creation Myth: **The Enûma Eliš**



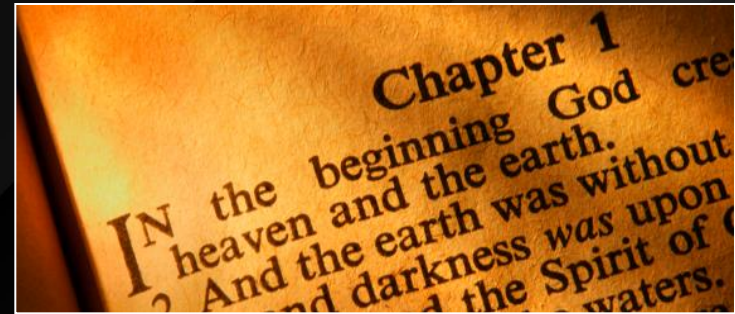
***I will take blood
And fashion bone;
I will establish a savage;
'Man' shall be his name,
Truly savage-man I will create!
He shall be charged with the
service of the gods,
That they might be at ease!***

The King

The People

Slaves (conquered peoples)

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ENUMA ELISH	BOTH	GENESIS I
Humans are made to serve God /the gods	The Creator gives names to what is created	All of humankind has authority over, and responsibility for, the rest of Creation
Humans are savage	God/Gods existed before Creation	Everything in Creation is good when it is made
The Creator is a warrior	The Creator gives order to the universe	The Creator acts alone
The Creator makes a city for himself		The creatures of the sea are good
The Creator rules with the agreement of others		The existence of matter before the act of Creation is ambiguous
The creatures of the sea are evil		Humans are essentially good
There are many gods (polytheism)		Creation is a result of the positive action of a Creator
Good and evil forces are equal and battle each other for supremacy (dualism)		Humans are the last to be created
Humans are created as a result of the destruction of something else		The Creator is eternal
It is clear that matter existed before the act of Creation		
Creation is a result of destruction		



"The Genesis story simply holds up a mirror to life, so that we can see ourselves in it."

Humans are special because they have a spiritual nature

Freedom without law is not possible

Humans have a special responsibility to care for the environment

There is one God: all powerful, loving and the source of all life

Human suffering is a result of the desire for power

Humans should not 'go it alone' in life, independently of God

student feedback

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I enjoyed the ability to openly look at questions from multiple stand points and pick apart these different points of view

I love the fact that we get to learn about something not many people get to in life

I enjoyed debating the idea of the universe being created. All the ideas from different philosophers were engaging and I found the arguments fascinating

The main skill that I have developed is looking at things in different ways. For example, looking at the universe being created by a God from a Christian's point of view, an atheist point of view and also the Jewish view. All of the sides had arguments that kept me wanting to know more

Year 9 PRS: what is a good life?



Themes

1. Happiness-seeking missiles?
2. Divided selves
3. Pleasure
4. Materialism
5. Positive psychology
6. Buddhism
7. Christianity

Endgame

- I go to school in order to...X
- I X in order to...Y
- I Y in order to...

From *'Exploring Ethics': Activity-centred teaching to develop thinking about values*, by Jeremy Hayward, Gerald Jones, Marilyn Mason. Published by Hodder in 2000 ISBN 9780719571817



Happiness is the meaning and purpose of life, the whole aim of human existence.
Aristotle

Happiness is the meaning and purpose of life, the whole aim of human existence. Aristotle

Happiness-seeking missiles





Jump forwards/backwards

When you see the following pictures
either **jump forwards** (for ones that
are pleasant) or **backwards** (for
ones that are unpleasant).

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Marking!!!



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Jump forwards/backwards

When you see the following pictures either **jump forwards** (for ones that are unpleasant) or **backwards** (for ones that are pleasant).

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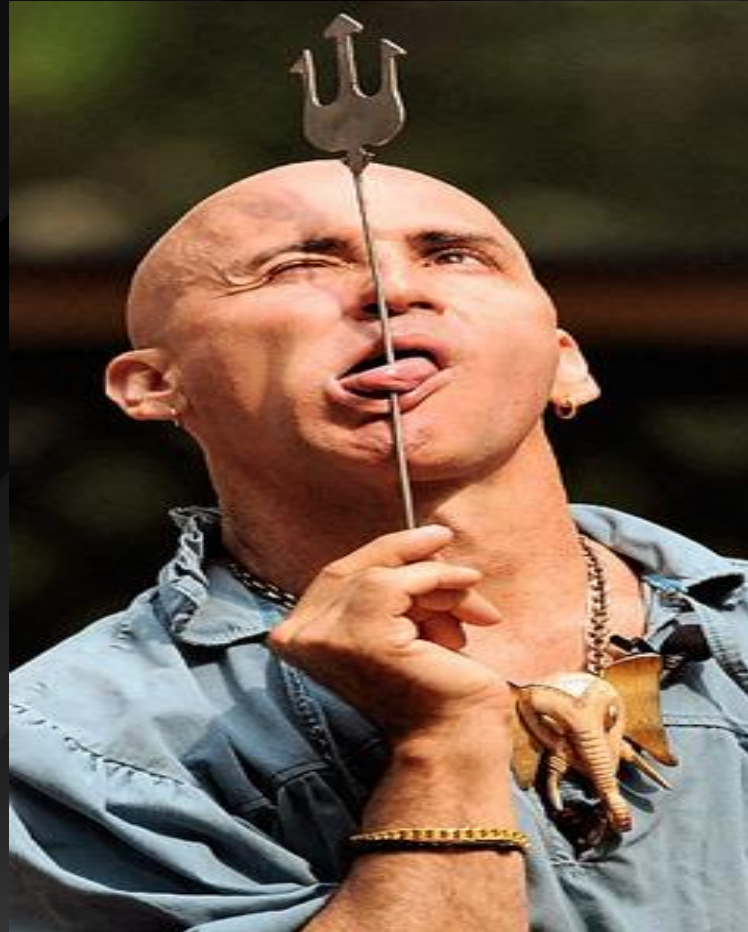


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LOOK AT THE LEFT LEG!!!

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Divided selves





Pleasure

Happiness in different activities

Activity	Average happiness	Average hours a day
Sex	4.7	0.2
Socialising	4.0	2.3
Relaxing	3.9	2.2
Praying/worshipping/meditating	3.8	0.4
Eating	3.8	2.2
Exercising	3.8	0.2
Watching TV	3.6	2.2
Shopping	3.2	0.4
Preparing food	3.2	1.1
Talking on the phone	3.1	2.5
Taking care of my children	3.0	1.1
Computer/email/Internet	3.0	1.9
Housework	3.0	1.1
Working	2.7	6.9
Commuting	2.6	1.6

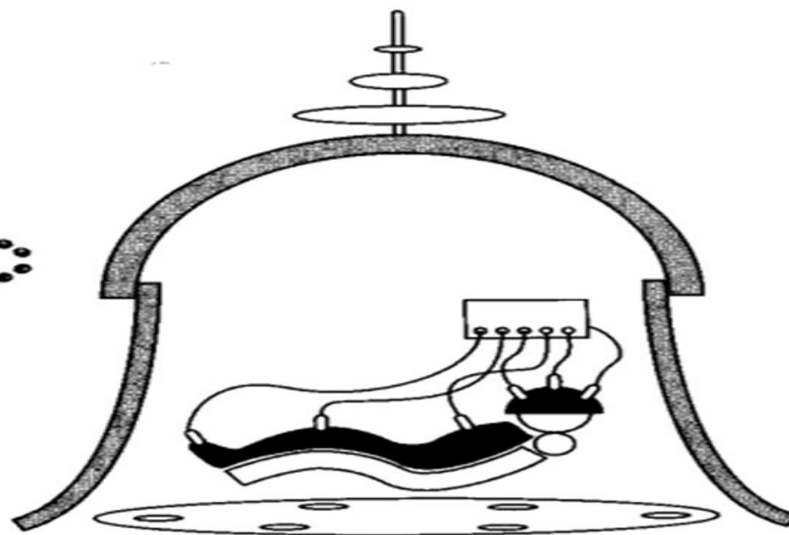
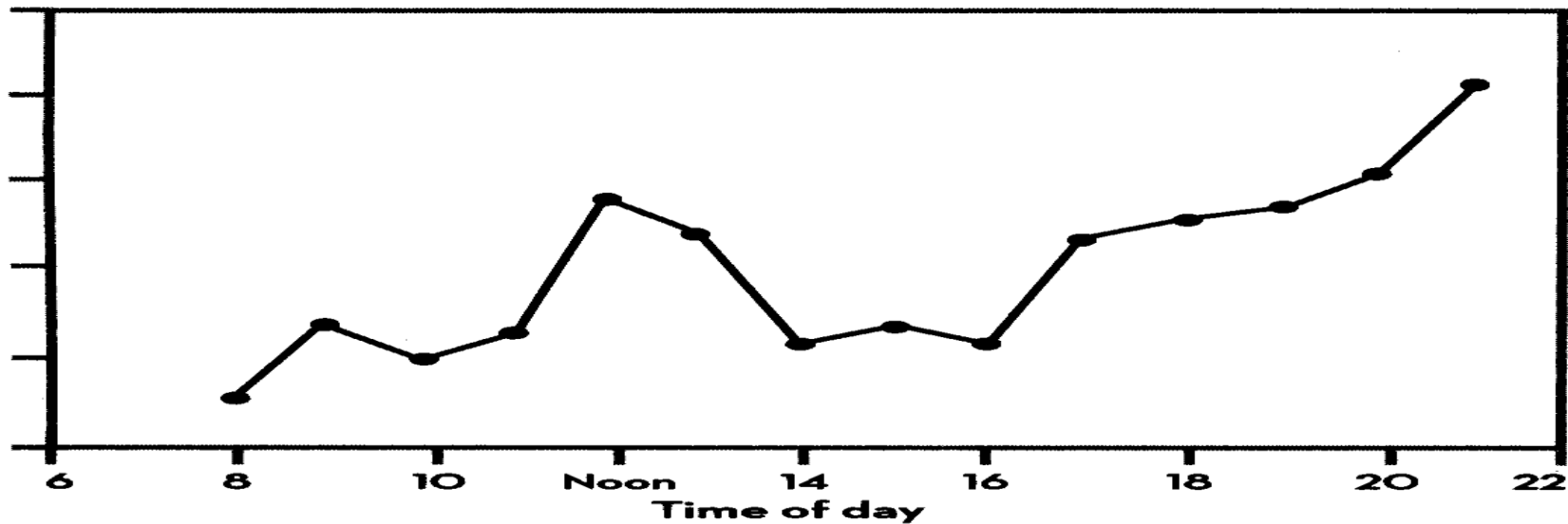
Note: More than one type of activity is possible at any one time.

Happiness while interacting with different people

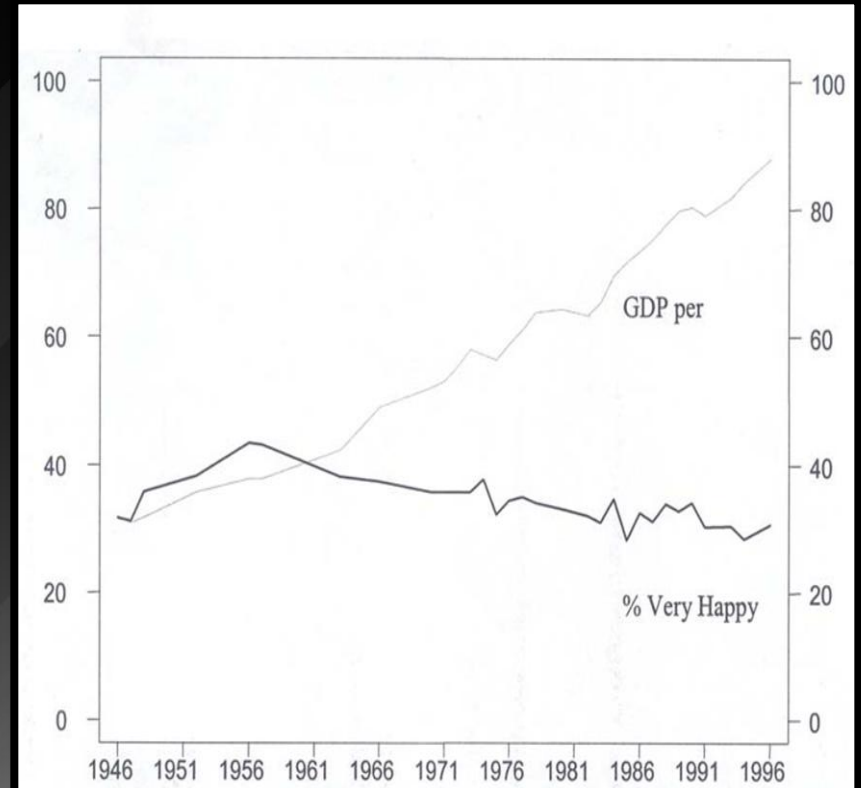
Interacting with	Average happiness	Average hours a day
Friends	3.7	2.6
Relatives	3.4	1.0
Spouse/partner	3.3	2.7
My children	3.3	2.3
Clients/customers	2.8	4.5
Co-workers	2.8	5.7
Alone	2.7	3.4
Boss	2.4	2.4

Note: More than one type of activity or type of company is possible at any one time.

Average happiness at different times of day



Materialism



Adaptation + Social Comparison = Hedonic treadmill



+



=

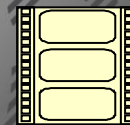


Acquire

Adapt

Aspire

Compare





Activity

- 1. Keep the images to yourself.**
- 2. Look at your own images and rate each one /10 according to how satisfied you would be if it were yours.**
- 3. Then compare with others in the group.**
- 4. Re rate any of your images having seen what others have got.**

When you hear the countdown music you have 30 seconds to wrap up.

Insights from positive psychology

What Determines Your Level of Happiness?



$$H = S + C + V$$

■ Genetics 50%
■ Environment 10 %
■ Intentional Activities 40%

source: Sonja Lyubomirsky's *Pursuing Happiness: The Architecture of Sustainable Change*.
www.faculty.ucr.edu/~sonja/papers/LSS2005.pdf

- Identify *signature character strengths* at: www.authentic happiness.sas.upenn.edu
- and find ways of *playing to them* and blogging/journaling about it.
- **Three good things:** Each evening for a week, write down three good things from that day.
- **Gratitude visit:** Write a letter to someone who has made a significantly positive contribution to your life. Then arrange to visit them and read it to them.

Buddhism



What we are today comes from our thoughts of yesterday, and our present thoughts build our life of tomorrow: our life is the creation of our mind. If we speak or act with an impure mind, suffering follows us as the wheel of the cart follows the ox... If we speak or act with a pure mind, joy follows us like our own shadow.

The Dhammapada 1:1-2

The human condition

The goal



The means

The Eight-Fold Path



Train your inner puppy!



Mindfulness activities

- **Attending the Senses:** The raisin (or strawberry etc.) meditation.
- **Awareness of an Object:** Draw an object. Then study the object carefully for two minutes. Draw it again. Compare the two drawings.



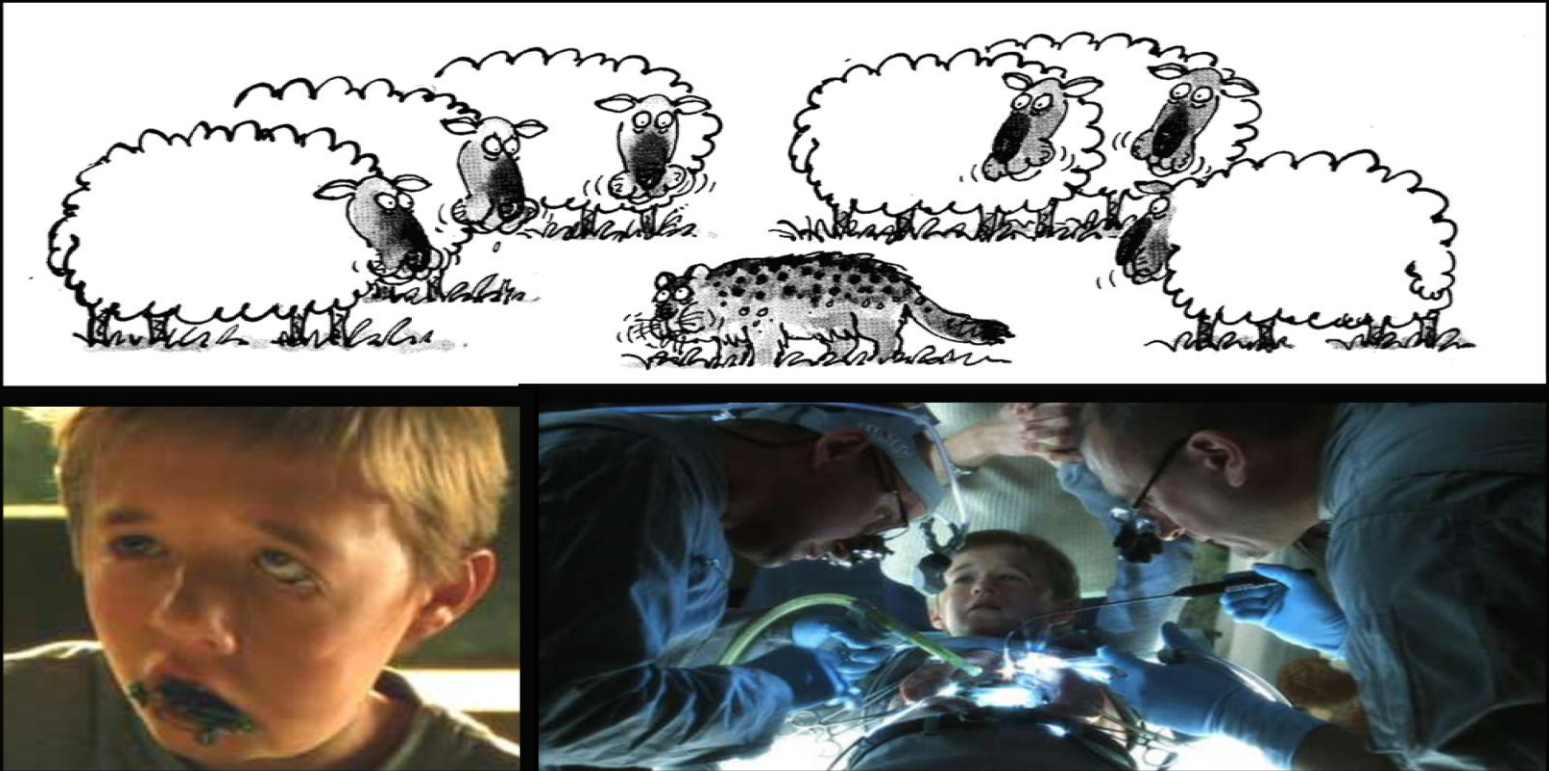
Christianity



Beloved, let us love one another, because love is from God; everyone who loves is born of God and knows God. 8 Whoever does not love does not know God, for God is love.

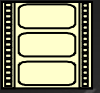
1 John 4: 7

The human condition



"Our Hearts are Restless Until They Rest in You"
From the *Confessions*
Saint Augustine of Hippo

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