

Some philosophers from the Indian subcontinent – An introduction

Shishir Lakhani



Om
(Hindus)



Dharmachakra
(Buddhist)



Khanda
(Sikhs)

Historical context and some timelines

~ 3500 years BC – Dravidian (indigenous) civilization in India.

~ 2500 BC – Indus Valley civilization (Neolithic to bronze age)

~ 1500 BC Then arrived the (Aryans?) migration down from Eurasia north of Caspian steppes - plains that opened up cross Asia doorway - bringing with it horses chariots? and metal weapons and

VEDIC TRADITIONS

Dravidians culture (hunter gatherers) mingling and some migration further south

Vedic Traditions

~ 1500 BC – Iron age Agricultural and tools

Vedic period - Rig Veda (mythologies) and Yajur Veda (rituals)

*Caste structures - Brahmins Kshatriyas Vaishya & Sudras
Verna at birth (Caste defined your position in life) **

Dharmashastra's - sutras (aphorisms) from Vedas

Four main aims and stages in life

1/Aarth (sustenance comforts prosperity)

2/Karma (action/deeds cause/effect)

3/ Dharma (expectations – codes ethics – What to do)

4/ Moksha (freedom from suffering and reincarnation)

***Sanskrit** literature and the oldest scriptures of Hinduism*

Vedic Traditions

~ 1500 BC Vedic Hindu traditions

- Hierarchies – castes
- Sacrifices
- Karma (Causal law)
- Reincarnation cycle
- Moksha (release from the cycle)



~950 BC The **Upanishads** (more philosophic and less mired in mythologies of Gods and Goddesses) are late Vedic Sanskrit texts of Philosophical teachings and ideas revered in Hinduism.

Epic period – Ramayana (idealism)

Mahabharata (pragmatism)

*Bhagwat Gita (considered an **Upanishad**)*



Bhagwat Gita

Key People I will discuss

- Siddhartha Gautama **Buddha** 566 BC
- Adi Shankracharya (**Sankara**) 788 AD
- Guru **Nanak** 1470 AD

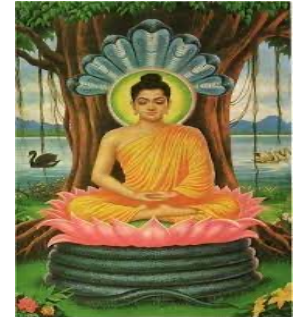


Buddha

~ 566 BC **Gautama Buddha** (*Axial Age*)

Established his “Dharma” (principles)

Ethics and compassion to all living things



The middle way - No caste / stay calm / meditate

NO CLASS SYSTEM - *Gautama taught a Middle Way between sensual indulgence and the severe asceticism*

Rebirth * *endless cycle called Samsara*

~ 230 BC **King Ashoka the Great** (*Mauryan dynasty*)

spread the message - pillars with writings

(Afghanistan China Japan SE Asia)

Buddhism 4th largest Religion in the World

Primarily 2 main streams ()*

MAHAYANA in CHINA TIBET

THERAVADA - SRI LANKA S.E. ASIA



Ashoka pillar

Buddha



Born as Siddhartha Gautama (in Magadha Bihar Province)

(From Hindu Kshatriya caste - well to do family)

Political thinker / Impersonal person / Suffering of the poor

Caste at Birth did not define life

All people Equal – NO castes – Women allowed - Temple open to all

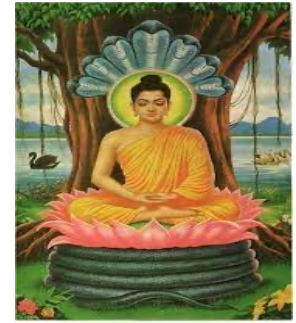
Egalitarian - relating to or believing in the principle that all people are equal and deserve equal rights and opportunities

This challenged the monopoly of Brahmins (upper caste) Hindus

The Buddha also critiqued the practices of Brahmin priests, such as animal sacrifice

Possible influences - Alternate belief systems had arrived from Persia, Palestine and Greece (Alexander 327BC) ??

Buddha



Inward focus and through experimentation 6 years fruitless efforts - with Ascetic life or the individual life

Found pure joy under a tree (Bodhi tree) – un muddle the mind – body calm

Awakened (Enlightened) – found the ‘middle way’

He taught a training of the mind that included ethical training, self-restraint, and meditative practices such as ‘**dhyna**’ (mindfulness).

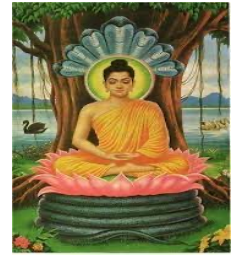
Buddha at Bamiyan - Afghanistan





Stupa

Buddha



***Reason we suffer (“Dukkha” * impermanence anxiety)
and make others suffer because we do not see clearly***

We tell stories of what we think and do - And make up, take ownership and defend these ideas - Stories are distorted conceptions

Mindful meditation * (exercise in attention- observe with more care - ignite your senses- feelings thoughts equanimity – reduces anxiety – temperance of emotions and feelings)

He taught for around 45 years and built a large following

In both Mahayana and Theravada traditions, many modes of meditation are very similar to Hindu traditions

‘Attempting to fulfill desires – unending chain’ – Schopenhauer

Buddha



Established his “Dharma’ (principles)

***4 Noble Truths** (Detach from existential anxiety),*

*Using the **8 Fold Path** (ethical living)*

Ethics and compassion to all living things

Compassion kindness - love your enemies

Gave a mode of morality - Choose the 'middle way' (temperate moderation) - no starving to death for self-realization

Did not condone Belief in one book,

OR sacrifice and mere prayers

NO Castes!!

General sequence of "birth, maturity, renunciation, search, awakening and liberation NIRVANA

Buddha



Secular Religion? / pluralistic global / Pessimistic?

(hope for better afterlives through better actions in this life)

Buddhism focuses on contemplative method by use of introspection – Meditation

Inner (not outside oneself) - Cosmic awareness (Nirvana)

Being able to focus and clear mind and find gaps of tranquility

*Nirvana, a concept in Buddhism, is a state of realization that there is no self (no soul) but Emptiness (Sunyata)**

Just do not identify with your ego / self identity no self!

Contrast with Hinduism, - Moksha, a concept common in many schools of Hinduism, is acceptance of Self (Atman individual soul), realization of liberating knowledge, the consciousness of Oneness with Brahman

Buddha



Be mindful of yourself and surroundings

Compassion based – expanded awareness

Ethics values and ideals can be devoid of religion

Adaptable and stays current to different parts of the world traditions

Anyone can follow principles without being a Buddhist

Allows for Skepticism (no Devine overseer / GOD)

Meditation/Mindfulness allows clarity and focus – FMRI confirms this (not just the placebo effect)

Buddhism lost its hold in India maybe because

Monastic / Renunciation life was a difficult model for society to thrive and grow..... and survive Wars?

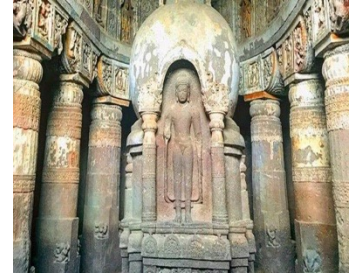
Pluralistic Hindus absorbed Buddha as yet another Avatar of an enlightened being

Buddhist quotes

"The root of suffering is attachment."

"Guard well your thoughts!"

"Radiate boundless love towards the entire world."



Ajanta caves

"Holding on to anger is like grasping a hot coal with the intent of throwing it at someone else; you are the one who gets burned"

"One is not called noble who harms living beings"

*"All Philosophies are mental fabrications" - **Nagarjuna***

*"Suffering necessary – No mudNo lotus" - **Thich Nhat Hanh***

*"We sacrifice our health in order to make wealth, then we sacrifice our wealth in order to get back our health". - **Dalai Lama***

Herman Hesse – Wrote the' Siddhartha'

Some famous Buddhists - David Bowie, George Lucas, Goldie Hwan, Steve Jobs, Allen Ginsberg.



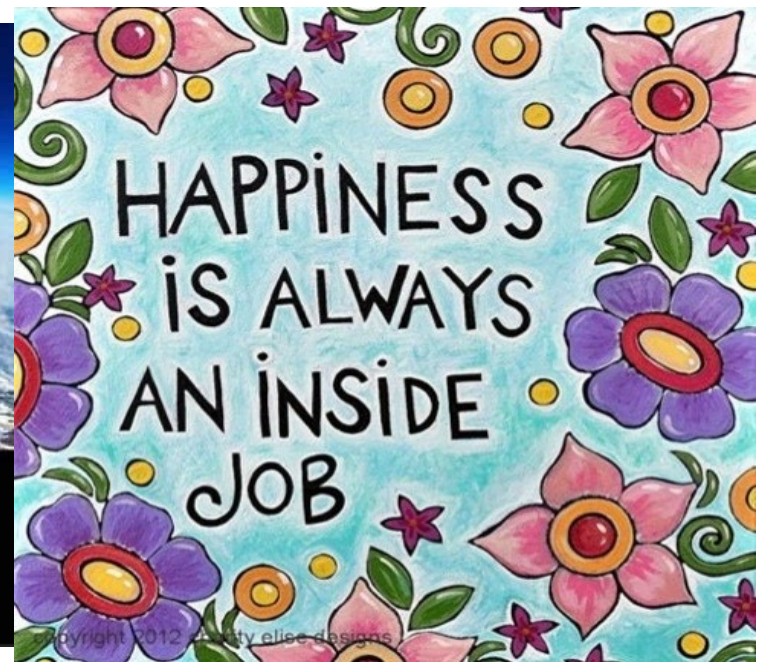
To find peace, sometimes you have to be willing to lose your connection with people, places, and things that create all the noise in your life.

BuddhismZone.org

spiritualgoal



God remains an illusion until you have realized him, and once you realize God, The world becomes an illusion



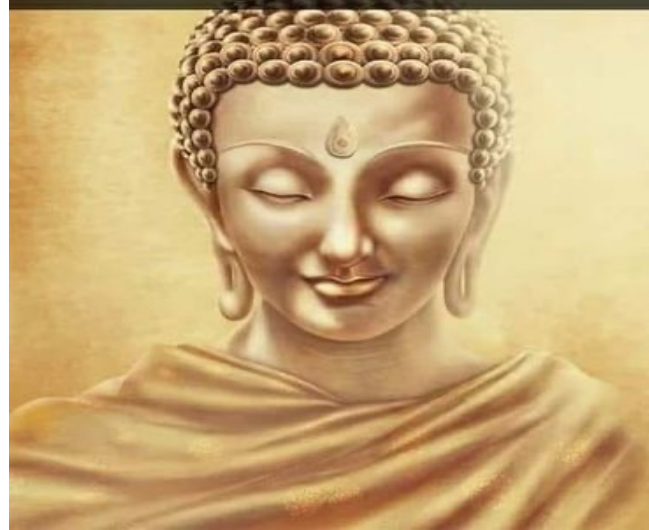
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Good Morning



In a world of turmoil
a Calm Mind
Is the only sanctuary

"In the end, just three things matter:
How well we have lived
How well we have loved
How well we have learned to let go"



CureJoy

Discussion / Questions



Hindu Vedic Tradition refresher

4 main aims and stages in life

- 1/ Aarth (pragmatic sustenance comforts prosperity) *
- 2/ Karma (action/deeds – cause and effect)
- 3/ Dharma (expectations – codes ethics)
- 4/ **Moksha** (freedom from suffering and reincarnation)

Hindu Vedic Tradition refresher

Become one with Brahman – Moksha

4 suggested ways (**margs**) to achieve moksha

- Devotion (**bhakti yoga**) Devotion and prayers
- Action (**karma yoga**) Duty without need for reward
- Meditation (**raja yoga**) Physical mental and emotional temperance
- Knowledge (**jnana yoga**) Self awareness and control

Yoga we practice (Pantanjali) is part of **karma and raja** yoga (calming & healthy body mind and spirit connection)

Adi Shankracharya (Sankara) Upanishad Philosopher



~788 AD - **Adi Shankracharya**

Advaita * Vedanta. (Atman**, Self, Brahman, Reality) He is credited with unifying and establishing the main currents of thought in Hinduism

*Undifferentiated consciousness (monism)****

Monism (non dualistic) Oneness with cosmos BRAHMAN - SPIRIT -
Om Tat Sat (You are that)

Not same as Monotheism (dualistic – GOD as a separate entity) ^

Historic context - Moslem attacks Turks/Arab conquest of some parts of India. and later 1200 – 1400 Islamic Moghul Empire (Babur descendant of Genghis Khan) – 1498 Portuguese arrive - English arrive 1600

Adi Shankracharya (Sankara) Upanishad Philosopher (788 AD)

Born in Karnataka (South India)

*Precocious boy. Father dies early in his life;
He renounces material life
Sanyasi at young age and became an Ascetic.*



*Many believe that Shankaracharya went to Samadhi (left body) at
the young age of 32 at Kedarnath in the Uttarakhand.
Himalayas*



Adi Shankracharya (Sankara)



Philosophy

Upanishad focused - stepped away from the Gods and Indian mythologies.

Vedas (knowledge metaphysical - existence and substance)

ATMAN is

- Consciousness (Chit)
- Existence (Sat)
- Bliss (Ananda)

Upanishads (many authors over time) **LIVING tradition** - we are part of a whole and all is interconnected (pantheist)
Atman is unknowable unless we lose our individuality
(differentiated consciousness) **WORLD IS ILLUSORY**

Adi Shankracharya (Sankara)



Adi Shankara Acharya travelled widely in India and preached his Advaita philosophy (established monasteries)

God without qualities

Individual selves and identity are illusions

Brahman (formless) is above all needs desires
qualities and attributes

Adi Shankracharya (Sankara)



Quotes

“Do not be proud of wealth, people, relations and friends, or youth. All these are snatched by time in the blink of an eye. Giving up this illusory world, know and attain the Supreme.”

“From a clear knowledge of the Bhagavad-gita all the goals of human existence become fulfilled. Bhagavad-gita is the manifest quintessence of all the teachings of the Vedic scriptures.”

“To be free from bondage the wise person must practice discrimination between One-Self and the ego-self. By that alone you will become full of joy, recognizing Self as Pure Being, Consciousness and Bliss.”

“Knowing that I am different from the body, I need not neglect the body. It is a vehicle that I use to transact with the world. It is the temple which houses the Pure Self within.”

“As gold purified in a furnace loses its impurities and achieves its own true nature, the mind gets rid of the impurities of the attributes of delusion, attachment and purity through meditation and attains Reality.”

Guru Nanak 1469 Sikhism



Son of upper caste Hindu
Father who worked as an Accountant in Delhi
for Ibrahim Lodhi (Muslim) dynasty

Guru Nanak also worked in Sultanpur for Lodhis

Context and Times

1556 Ibrahim Lodhi defeated by Moghuls
Babur (Descendant from Genghis Khan) took power

Times of Moghul (Muslim) dynastic Empire – Some tyrannical rulers. Gulams (slaves) (Taxation on non Muslims) (Some Sikh Gurus imprisoned / killed)
Hindus caste divisions and unequal – differentiations
British East India Company active in India

Guru Nanak 1469 Sikhism



Nanak influenced by Hindu and Muslim traditions
A religious innovator
and the founder of the **Sikh religion**.
Sikh – A Pali word – means disciple

Pragmatic Religion and lifestyle

Devotion (*similar to Bhakti yoga*),
Stay engaged in duties and responsibility of a just society (*similar to Karma Yoga*)

‘Those that have loved.. Have found GOD’

Against Ascetic / Monastic life

What’s happening to humanity asked a sage?

Nanak answers ‘if all wise men are ascetic ... what do you expect?’

Guru Nanak 1469 Sikhism



Nankana Sahib
(Nanak birthplace)

Tried to learn from **both Hinduism and Islam**
Collected works of Kabir (Sufi poetic tradition)

He travelled widely

- Mecca, Medina Saudi
- Assam
- Benaras (Ganges)
- Columbo Sri Lanka
- Laddakh Tibet and
- Nepal



Khanda – Sikh symbol

Guru Nanak - Sikhism



Preoccupied by **social justice**

Non pacifist Militant (reflection of times)

All humans equal and require dignity

All children of God

What are the Sikh principles?

There are three core tenets of the Sikh beliefs:

1. Meditation upon and devotion to the Creator, - *Naam Jappo*
2. Truthful living
3. Service to humanity

Found followers in Hindus Muslims Sufis etc.

Teachings and writings in Punjabi (as opposed to monopoly of learned Arabic / Sanskrit)



Guru Nanak - Sikhism



Sikhs still show respect to all beliefs.

Allah (Islam), Ishwar (Hindu) and Jesus (Christian)

Only One God and Truth is His Name

GOD - Sikhism is a **monotheistic** religion.

Sikhs believe there is one God **Waheguru** (Wonderful God or Lord).

There's only one God

*Arhankar (beyond time and reincarnation) immortal omnipresent
omniscient his name is the only truth, he is the only creator, he is fearless,
he is without hate, he is immortal, he is beyond birth and death, and by
only his grace one can chant his name*

Guru Nanak - Sikhism



Guru Nanak was the first of the ten Sikh Gurus.

Sikhs are not Hindus, they have differences in scriptures, social status, worship, religious appearance, and so on.

Sikh gurus had also denounced the hierarchy of the caste system

Sikhism is closer to Hinduism than Islam as it retains Hindu theories of **karma and reincarnation**, even though Sikhism foundations are closer to Islam as it **advocates monotheism**.

Sikh Traditions



Guru Gobind Singh – 10th and the last Guru*
turned their writings into
Guru Granth (Gurumukhi)

Khalsa** refers to both a community that considers Sikhism as
its faith, as well as a special group of initiated Sikhs

Sahib Khalsa (means pure) tradition of **5 k's**

- **K**esh uncut hair
- **K**anga hair comb
- **K**ara bangle
- **K**accha shorts
- **K**ripan sword

Guru Nanak - Sikhism

- Monotheistic
- Casteless
- Women Equality
- Humanity
- New order Religious Social and Spiritual
- Equal Just society



Sangath (community) – communal consciousness

Path of social interdependence

Tradition of free meals – Langar *

Now a global community (~ 30 million followers)



Golden Temple
(Amritsar)

Guru Nanak - Sikhism



Quotes

"He who regards all men as equals is religious."

*"The world is a drama, staged in a dream." **

*"What should the yogi have to fear? Trees, plants, and all that is inside and outside is He Himself." ***

*"Those who have loved are those that have found God." ****

*"Countless are the ways of meditation, and countless are the avenues of love." (Japji, 17). *****

Some common threads

Ontology – existence and reality –universe as infinite and with no beginning.

Idealism & Pragmatism

*Perception based in the observer NOT independent of it
Mindfulness meditation*

Reincarnation (variations)

No GOD creator

Justice

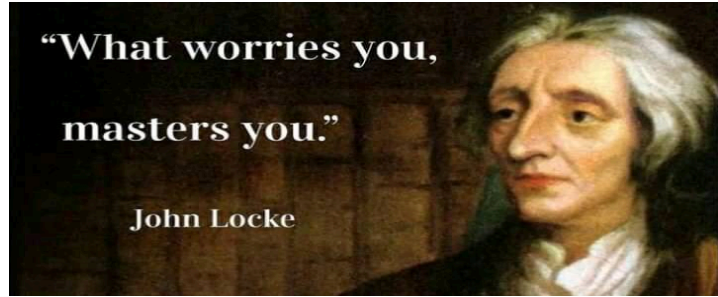
Consciousness – A subjective experience

*Worldwide influence – Continental Philosophers, Romantics,
Stoics, Transcendentalist, Introspective, Experiential,
Universalists, Monists, New Age*

Inner peace

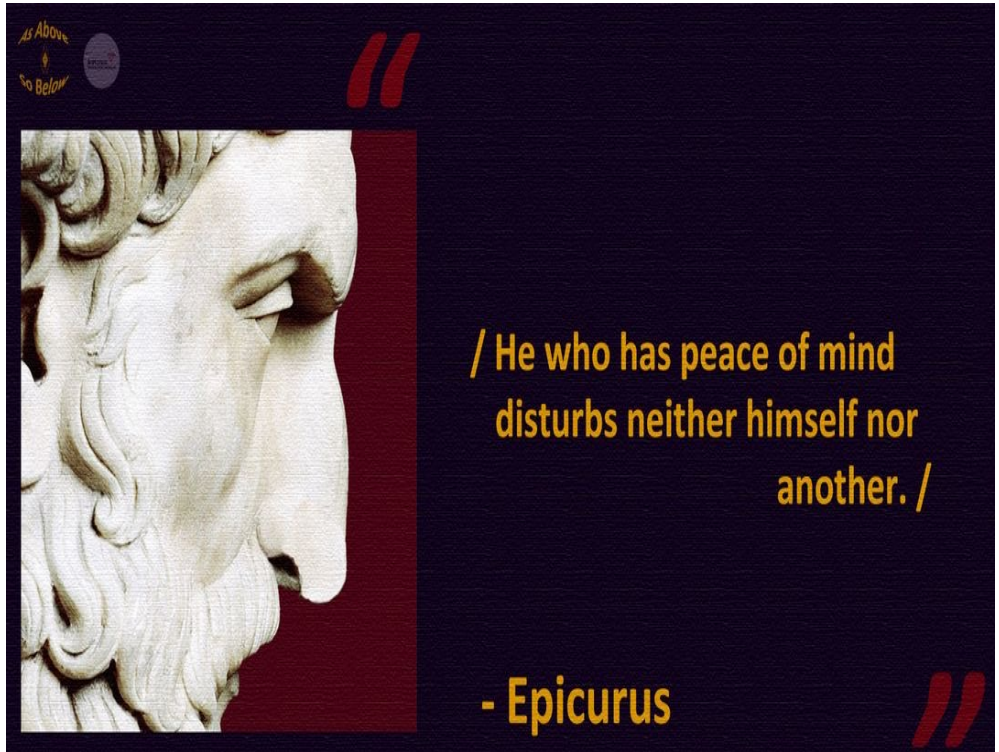
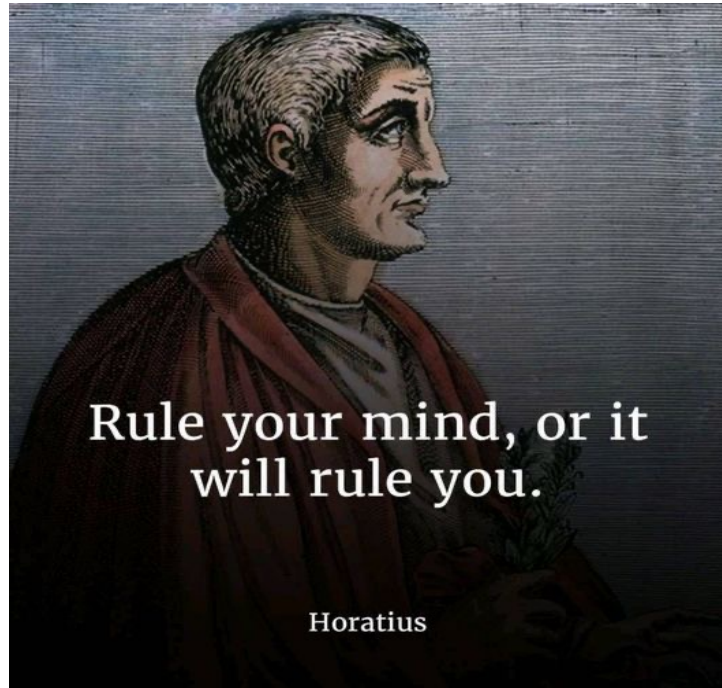
“What worries you,
masters you.”

John Locke



Rule your mind, or it
will rule you.

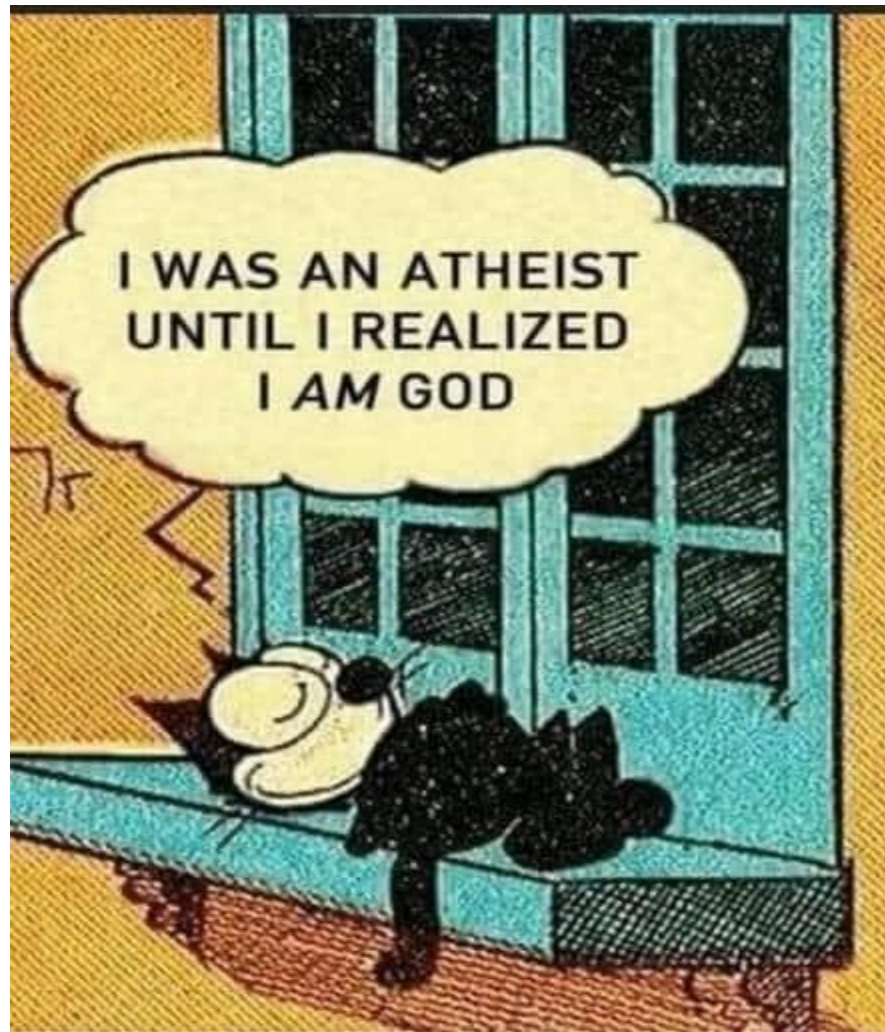
Horatius



/ He who has peace of mind
disturbs neither himself nor
another. /

- Epicurus

Hope you had fun



Discussion / Questions

