

Definitions

An Incomplete Selection Of Contemplative Definitions



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Breadcrumbs: Definitions
Bits and Pieces from a Dream of Time
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Pronunciation: Holtzhowzer

*All have the express written encouragement
To distribute this creation freely to any and all
Who have the eyes to see and the ears to hear
The mystery in which each and every one
Equally participates in so many ways.*

A

agnostic | ag' năstik |
noun

a person who believes that nothing is known or can be known
of the existence or nature of God or of anything beyond material phenomena;
a person who claims neither faith nor disbelief in God.

adjective

relating to agnostics or agnosticism.

- (in a nonreligious context) having a doubtful or noncommittal attitude toward something:
until now I've been fairly agnostic about electoral reform.

noun

as far as I know, Stevens was an atheist, or at least an agnostic:
skeptic, doubter, doubting Thomas, cynic;
unbeliever, nonbeliever, rationalist; rare nullifidian.
ANTONYMS believer, theist.

* * * *

antimatter | 'an(t)ē, madər, 'an, tī, madər |
noun

Physics: molecules formed by atoms consisting of antiprotons, antineutrons, and positrons.
Stable antimatter does not appear to exist in our universe.

* * * *

aphorism | 'afə, rizəm |
noun

a pithy observation that contains a general truth,
such as, “if it ain't broke, don't fix it.”

a concise statement of a scientific principle,
typically by an ancient classical author.

Origin: early 16th century:
from French aphorisme or late Latin aphorismus,
from Greek aphorismos ‘definition,’ from aphorizein ‘define.’

Thesaurus: she was a fount of Orwellian aphorisms:
saying, maxim, axiom, adage, epigram, dictum,
gnome, proverb, saw, tag; rare apophthegm.

* * * *

arbitrary | 'ərbə, trerē |
adjective

based on random choice or personal whim, rather than any reason or system:
his mealtimes were entirely arbitrary.

- (of power or a ruling body) unrestrained and autocratic in the use of authority:
arbitrary rule by King and bishops has been made impossible.
- Mathematics (of a constant or other quantity) of unspecified value.

1 an arbitrary decision: capricious, whimsical, random, chance, unpredictable;
casual, wanton, unmotivated, motiveless, unreasoned, unsupported, irrational,
illogical, groundless, unjustified; personal, discretionary, subjective.

ANTONYMS reasoned, rational.

2 the arbitrary power of the prince: autocratic, dictatorial, autarchic,
undemocratic, despotic, tyrannical, authoritarian, high-handed;
absolute, uncontrolled, unlimited, unrestrained.

ANTONYMS democratic.

* * * *

atheism | 'āTHē, izəm |
noun

disbelief or lack of belief in the existence of God or gods.

atheism was not freely discussed in his community:
nonbelief, disbelief, unbelief, irreligion, skepticism, doubt, agnosticism; nihilism.

* * * *

atheist | 'āTHēəst |
noun

a person who disbelieves or lacks belief in the existence of God or gods:
he is a committed atheist.

why is it often assumed that a man of science is probably an atheist?
nonbeliever, disbeliever, unbeliever, skeptic, doubter, doubting Thomas, agnostic; nihilist.

ANTONYMS believer.

* * * *

atom | 'adəm |
noun

the basic unit of a chemical element.

- atoms as a source of nuclear energy: the power of the atom.

An atom, roughly 10^{-8} cm in diameter,
consists of a tiny, dense, positively charged nucleus made of neutrons and protons,
surrounded by a cloud of negatively charged electrons.
Each chemical element consists of atoms that possess a characteristic number of protons.
Atoms are held together in molecules by sharing electrons.

B

belief | bə'lēf |
noun

1 an acceptance that a statement is true or that something exists:
his belief in the value of hard work | a belief that solitude nourishes creativity.

- something one accepts as true or real; a firmly held opinion or conviction:
we're prepared to fight for our beliefs |
contrary to popular belief, Aramaic is a living language.

- a religious conviction: Christian beliefs |
I'm afraid to say belief has gone | local beliefs and customs.

2 (belief in) trust, faith, or confidence in someone or something:
a belief in democratic politics | I've still got belief in myself.

1 it's my belief that age is irrelevant: opinion, view, conviction, judgment,
thinking, way of thinking, idea, impression, theory, conclusion, notion.

2 belief in the value of hard work: faith, trust, reliance, confidence, credence.
ANTONYMS disbelief, doubt.

3 traditional beliefs: ideology, principle, ethic, tenet, canon;
doctrine, teaching, dogma, article of faith, creed, credo.

* * * *

believer | bə'lēvər |
noun

1 a person who believes that a specified thing is effective, proper, or desirable:
a firm believer that party politics has no place in local government | a believer in ghosts.

2 an adherent of a particular religion; someone with religious faith.

a cause with few believers:
devotee, adherent, disciple, follower, supporter.
ANTONYMS infidel, skeptic.

* * * *

biology | bī'äləjē | (abbreviation biol.)
noun

the study of living organisms, divided into many specialized fields
that cover their morphology, physiology, anatomy, behavior, origin, and distribution.

- the plants and animals of a particular area: the biology of Chesapeake Bay.

- the physiology, behavior, and other qualities of a particular organism or class of organisms: human biology.

* * * *

bliss | blis |

noun

perfect happiness; great joy:
she gave a sigh of bliss.

- a state of spiritual blessedness, typically that reached after death.

verb

[no object] informal (bliss out or be blissed out) reach a state of perfect happiness, typically so as to be oblivious of everything else: [as adjective] : blissed-out hippies.

noun

1 she gave a sigh of bliss:
joy, happiness, pleasure, delight, ecstasy, elation, rapture, euphoria.
ANTONYMS misery.

2 religions promise perfect bliss after death:
blessedness, benediction, beatitude, glory, heavenly joy, divine happiness; heaven, paradise.
ANTONYMS hell.

* * * *

Brahman | 'brɑ:mən |

noun

(plural Brahmins)

1 (also Brahmin) a member of the highest Hindu caste, originally that of the priesthood: [as modifier] : a Brahman family.

- 2 [mass noun] the ultimate reality underlying all phenomena in the Hindu scriptures: Brahman is formless but is the birthplace of all forms in visible reality.

ORIGIN from Sanskrit brāhmaṇa (Brahman (sense 1)),
brahman (Brahman (sense 2)).

* * * *

Buddha | 'boodə | (often the Buddha)

a title given to the founder of Buddhism, Siddhartha Gautama (c. 563–c. 460 bc).
Born a prince in what is now Nepal, he renounced wealth and family to become an ascetic,

and after achieving enlightenment while meditating, taught all who came to learn from him.

- (as noun a buddha) Buddhism a person who has attained full enlightenment.
 - a statue or picture of the Buddha.

ORIGIN Sanskrit, literally 'enlightened', past participle of budh 'know'.

C

cancer |'kɑnsər|
noun

the disease caused by an uncontrolled division of abnormal cells in a part of the body:
he's got cancer | smoking is the major cause of lung cancer.

- a malignant growth or tumor resulting from the division of abnormal cells:
most skin cancers are curable.
- a practice or phenomenon perceived to be evil or destructive and hard to contain or eradicate:
racism is a cancer sweeping across Europe.

* * * *

chemistry | 'keməstrē | (abbreviation chem.)
noun
(plural chemistries)

the branch of science that deals with the identification of the substances of which matter is composed; the investigation of their properties and the ways in which they interact, combine, and change; and the use of these processes to form new substances.

- the chemical composition and properties of a substance or body: the chemistry of soil.

* * * *

civil | 'siv(ə)l |
adjective

1 [attributive]

relating to ordinary citizens and their concerns,
as distinct from military or ecclesiastical matters: civil aviation.

- (of disorder or conflict) occurring between citizens of the same country.
- Law relating to private relations between members of a community; noncriminal: a civil action.
 - Law relating to civil law.

2 courteous and polite: we tried to be civil to him.

3 (of time measurement or a point in time) fixed by custom or law rather than being natural or astronomical: civil twilight starts at sunset.

1 a civil marriage: secular, nonreligious, lay; formal laic.
ANTONYMS religious.

2 civil aviation: nonmilitary, civilian.
ANTONYMS military.

3 a civil war: internal, domestic, interior, national.
ANTONYMS international, foreign.

4 he behaved in a civil manner: polite, courteous,
well mannered, well bred, chivalrous, gallant;
cordial, genial, pleasant, affable; gentlemanly, ladylike.
ANTONYMS discourteous, rude.

* * * *

civilization | ,sivələ'zāSH(ə)n |
noun

the stage of human social development and organization
which is considered most advanced:
they equated the railroad with progress and civilization.

- the process by which a society or place reaches an advanced stage
of social development and organization.
- the society, culture, and way of life of a particular area:
the great books of Western civilization |
the early civilizations of Mesopotamia and Egypt.
 - the comfort and convenience of modern life,
regarded as available only in towns and cities:
the fur traders moved further and further from civilization.

1 a higher stage of civilization:
human development, advancement, progress, enlightenment,
culture, refinement, sophistication.

2 ancient civilizations: culture, society, nation, people.

* * * *

conditioning | kən'dɪʃənɪŋ |
noun

1 check the condition of your wiring: state, shape, order.

2 they lived in appalling conditions:
circumstances, surroundings, environment, situation, setup, setting, habitat.

3 she was in top condition: fitness, health, form, shape, trim, fettle.

4 a liver condition:
disorder, problem, complaint, illness, disease, ailment, sickness, affliction, infection, upset.

5 a condition of membership:
stipulation, constraint, prerequisite, precondition, requirement,
rule, term, specification, provision, proviso.

verb

1 their choices are conditioned by the economy:
constrain, control, govern, determine, decide; affect, touch; form, shape, guide, sway, bias.

2 our minds are conditioned by habit:
train, teach, educate, guide; accustom, adapt, habituate, mold, inure.

3 condition the boards with water:
treat, prepare, prime, temper, process, acclimatize, acclimate, season.

4 a product to condition your skin:
improve, nourish, tone (up), moisturize.

* * * *

contemplation | ,kän(t)əm 'plāSH(ə)n |
noun

the action of looking thoughtfully at something for a long time:
the road is too busy for leisurely contemplation of the scenery.

- deep reflective thought: he would retire to his room for study or contemplation.
 - the state of being thought about or planned.
 - religious meditation.
 - (in Christian spirituality) a form of prayer or meditation in which a person seeks to pass beyond mental images and concepts to a direct experience of the divine.

1 the contemplation of beautiful objects:
viewing, examination, inspection, observation, survey, study, scrutiny.

2 the monks sat in quiet contemplation:
thought, reflection, meditation, consideration, rumination, deliberation,
reverie, introspection, brown study; formal cogitation, cerebration.

* * * *

cosmopolitan | ,kāzmə'pälətn |
adjective

including or containing people from many different countries:
immigration transformed the city into a cosmopolitan metropolis.

- familiar with and at ease in many different countries and cultures:
his knowledge of French, Italian, and Spanish made him genuinely cosmopolitan.
- having an exciting and glamorous character associated with travel and a mixture of cultures:
their designs became a byword for cosmopolitan chic.

D

dark energy
noun

Physics: a theoretical repulsive force that counteracts gravity and causes the universe to expand at an accelerating rate: Einstein's theories allow for the possible existence of dark energy.

* * * *

deism | 'dē,izəm, 'dā,izəm |
noun

belief in the existence of a supreme being, specifically of a creator who does not intervene in the universe. The term is used chiefly of an intellectual movement of the 17th and 18th centuries that accepted the existence of a creator on the basis of reason but rejected belief in a supernatural deity who interacts with humankind. Compare with theism.

* * * *

deity | 'dēədē, 'dāədē |
noun
(plural deities)

a god or goddess (in a polytheistic religion): a deity of ancient Greece.

- divine status, quality, or nature: a ruler driven by delusions of deity.
- (usually the Deity) the creator and supreme being (in a monotheistic religion such as Christianity).
- a representation of a god or goddess, such as a statue or carving.

the deities of ancient Greece:
god, goddess, divine being, supreme being, divinity, immortal;
creator, demiurge; godhead.

* * * *

democracy | də'mākɹəsē |
noun
(plural democracies)

a system of government by the whole population or all the eligible members of a state, typically through elected representatives:
capitalism and democracy are ascendant in the third world.

- a state governed by a democracy:

a multiparty democracy.

- control of an organization or group by the majority of its members:
the intended extension of industrial democracy.
- the practice or principles of social equality:
demands for greater democracy.

freedom of speech is essential to democracy:
representative government, elective government;
self-government, government by the people; republic, commonwealth.
ANTONYMS dictatorship.

* * * *

desultory | 'desəl,tôrē |
adjective

lacking a plan, purpose, or enthusiasm:
a few people were left, dancing in a desultory fashion.

- (of conversation or speech) going constantly
from one subject to another in a halfhearted way;
unfocused: the desultory conversation faded.
- occurring randomly or occasionally:
desultory passengers were appearing.

the desultory interest you have in your child's welfare is appalling:
casual, cursory, superficial, token, perfunctory, halfhearted, lukewarm;
random, aimless, erratic, unmethodical, unsystematic, chaotic,
inconsistent, irregular, intermittent, sporadic, fitful.
ANTONYMS keen.

* * * *

disingenuous | ,disən'jenyooəs |
adjective

not candid or sincere, typically by pretending
that one knows less about something than one really does.

that innocent, teary-eyed look is just part of a disingenuous act:
insincere, dishonest, untruthful, false, deceitful,
duplicitous, lying, mendacious; hypocritical.

* * * *

dogma | 'dôgmə |
noun

a principle or set of principles laid down by an authority as incontrovertibly true:
the rejection of political dogma | the Christian dogma of the Trinity.

a dogma of the Sikh religion:
teaching, belief, tenet, principle, precept, maxim, article of faith,
canon; creed, credo, set of beliefs, doctrine, ideology.

* * * *

doubt | dout |
noun

a feeling of uncertainty or lack of conviction:
some doubt has been cast upon the authenticity of this account |
they had doubts that they would ever win.

verb

1 [with object] feel uncertain about: I doubt my ability to do the job.

- question the truth or fact of (something): who can doubt the value of these services? |
[with clause] : I doubt if anyone slept that night.
- disbelieve (a person or their word): I have no reason to doubt him.
- [no object] feel uncertain, especially about one's religious beliefs.

2 [with clause] archaic fear; be afraid: I doubt not your contradictions.

noun

1 there was some doubt as to the caller's identity:
uncertainty, unsureness, indecision, hesitation, dubiousness, suspicion, confusion;
queries, questions; formal dubiety.
ANTONYMS certainty.

2 a weak leader racked by doubt:
indecision, hesitation, uncertainty, insecurity, unease, uneasiness, apprehension;
hesitancy, vacillation, irresolution.
ANTONYMS confidence, conviction.

3 there is doubt about their motives:
skepticism, distrust, mistrust, doubtfulness, suspicion, cynicism,
uneasiness, apprehension, wariness, chariness, leeriness;
reservations, misgivings, suspicions; formal dubiety.
ANTONYMS trust.

verb

1 they doubted my story:
disbelieve, distrust, mistrust, suspect, have doubts about, be suspicious of,
have misgivings about, have qualms about, feel uneasy about,
feel apprehensive about, query, question, challenge.

ANTONYMS trust.

2 I doubt whether he will come:
think something unlikely, have (one's) doubts about, question, query, be dubious.
ANTONYMS be confident.

3 stop doubting and believe!
be undecided, have doubts, be irresolute, be ambivalent, be doubtful, be unsure,
be uncertain, be of two minds, hesitate, shilly-shally, waver, vacillate.
ANTONYMS believe.

* * * *

duality | d(y)oo'aldē |

noun

(plural dualities)

1 the quality or condition of being dual:
the novel's deep duality about human motive.

- Mathematics the property of two theorems, expressions, etc.,
of being dual to each other.

- Physics the quantum-mechanical property
of being regardable as both a wave and a particle.

2 an instance of opposition or contrast
between two concepts or two aspects of something;

a dualism:

the photographs capitalize on the dualities of light and dark, stillness and movement.

there was a duality in her feelings towards Johnny:
doubleness, dualism, duplexity, ambivalence;
dichotomy, polarity, separation, opposition, difference.

E

electromagnetic spectrum | əˌlektʀōmægˈnetɪk | | ˈspektrəm |
noun

Physics: the range of wavelengths or frequencies
over which electromagnetic radiation extends.

* * * *

emotion | əˈmōʃ(ə)n |
noun

a natural instinctive state of mind
deriving from one's circumstances, mood, or relationships with others:
she was attempting to control her emotions |
his voice was low and shaky with emotion |
fear had become his dominant emotion.

- instinctive or intuitive feeling as distinguished from reasoning or knowledge:
responses have to be based on historical insight, not simply on emotion.

1 she was good at hiding her emotions:
feeling, sentiment; reaction, response.

2 overcome by emotion, she turned away:
passion, strength of feeling, warmth of feeling.

3 responses based purely on emotion:
instinct, intuition, gut feeling; sentiment, the heart.

* * * *

energy | ˈenərjē |
noun
(plural energies)

Physics: the property of matter and radiation
which is manifest as a capacity to perform work
(such as causing motion or the interaction of molecules):
a collision in which no energy is transferred.

- a degree or level of energy possessed by something or required by a process:
gamma rays at different energies.

* * * *

enlightenment | inˈlɪtmənt, enˈlɪtmənt |
noun

1 the action of enlightening or the state of being enlightened:

Robbie looked to me for enlightenment.

- the action or state of attaining or having attained spiritual knowledge or insight, in particular (in Buddhism) that awareness which frees a person from the cycle of rebirth.

2 (the Enlightenment) a European intellectual movement of the late 17th and 18th centuries emphasizing reason and individualism rather than tradition.

It was heavily influenced by 17th-century philosophers such as Descartes, Locke, and Newton, and its prominent exponents include Kant, Goethe, Voltaire, Rousseau, and Adam Smith.

sharing her musical enlightenment with her children:

insight, understanding, awareness, wisdom, education, learning, knowledge;
illumination, awakening, instruction, teaching; sophistication, advancement, development,
open-mindedness, broad-mindedness; culture, refinement, cultivation, civilization.

* * * *

esoteric | ,esə'terik |
adjective

intended for or likely to be understood by only a small number of people
with a specialized knowledge or interest:
esoteric philosophical debates.

in attendance were more than 50 antiques dealers brimming with esoteric knowledge:
abstruse, obscure, arcane, recherché, rarefied, recondite, abstract;
enigmatic, inscrutable, cryptic, Delphic;
complex, complicated, incomprehensible, opaque, impenetrable, mysterious.

* * * *

eternal | ə'tərn(ə)l |
adjective

lasting or existing forever; without end or beginning:
the secret of eternal youth | fear of eternal damnation.

- (of truths, values, or questions) valid for all time;
essentially unchanging: eternal truths of art and life.

- informal seeming to last or persist forever,
especially on account of being tedious or annoying:
eternal nagging demands | she is an eternal optimist.

- used to emphasize expressions of admiration, gratitude, or other feelings:
to his eternal credit, he maintained his dignity throughout.

- (the Eternal) used to refer to an everlasting or universal spirit, as represented by God.

1 eternal happiness: everlasting, never-ending, endless, perpetual,

undying, immortal, abiding, permanent, enduring,
infinite, boundless, timeless; amaranthine.
ANTONYMS transient.

2 eternal vigilance: constant, continual, continuous, perpetual, persistent,
sustained, unremitting, relentless, unrelieved, uninterrupted, unbroken,
never-ending, nonstop, around/round-the-clock, endless, ceaseless.
ANTONYMS intermittent.

* * * *

eternity | ə'tɜrnədē |
noun
(plural eternities)

infinite or unending time:
their love was sealed for eternity |
this state of affairs has lasted for all eternity.

- a state to which time has no application; timelessness.
- Theology endless life after death: immortal souls destined for eternity.
 - used euphemistically to refer to death:
he could have crashed the car and taken them both to eternity.
 - (an eternity) informal a period of time that seems very long,
especially on account of being tedious or annoying:
a silence that lasted an eternity.

1 the memory will remain for eternity: ever, all time, perpetuity.

2 Theology souls destined for eternity:
the afterlife, everlasting life, life after death, the hereafter, the afterworld, the next world;
heaven, paradise, immortality.

3 informal I waited an eternity for you:
a long time, an age, ages, a lifetime; hours, years, eons; forever;
informal donkey's years, a month of Sundays, a coon's age.

* * * *

ethics | 'eTHiks |
plural noun

1 [usually treated as plural] moral principles
that govern a person's behavior or the conducting of an activity:
medical ethics also enter into the question | a code of ethics.

- the moral correctness of specified conduct:

many scientists question the ethics of cruel experiments.

2 [usually treated as singular] the branch of knowledge that deals with moral principles.

Schools of ethics in Western philosophy can be divided, very roughly, into three sorts.

The first, drawing on the work of Aristotle,
holds that the virtues (such as justice, charity, and generosity)
are dispositions to act in ways that benefit both the person possessing them
and that person's society.

The second, defended particularly by Kant,
makes the concept of duty central to morality:
humans are bound, from a knowledge of their duty as rational beings,
to obey the categorical imperative to respect other rational beings.

Thirdly, utilitarianism asserts that the guiding principle of conduct
should be the greatest happiness or benefit of the greatest number.

your so-called newspaper is clearly not burdened by a sense of ethics:
moral code, morals, morality, values, rights and wrongs, principles, ideals,
standards (of behavior), value system, virtues, dictates of conscience.

* * * *

exist | ig'zist |
verb [no object]

1 have objective reality or being:
there existed no organization to cope with espionage |
remains of these baths still exist on the south side of the Pantheon.

• be found, especially in a particular place or situation:
two conflicting stereotypes of housework exist in popular thinking today.

2 live, especially under adverse conditions:
only a minority of people exist on unemployment benefits alone |
how am I going to exist without you?

* * * *

existential | ,egzə'sten(t)SH(ə)l |
adjective

relating to existence.

• Philosophy concerned with existence,
especially human existence as viewed in the theories of existentialism.

- Logic (of a proposition) affirming or implying the existence of a thing.

* * * *

existentialism | ,egzə'sten(t)SHə,lizəm |
noun

a philosophical theory or approach which emphasizes the existence of the individual person as a free and responsible agent determining their own development through acts of the will.

Generally taken to originate with Kierkegaard and Nietzsche,
existentialism tends to be atheistic
(although there is a strand of Christian existentialism deriving from the work of Kierkegaard),
to disparage scientific knowledge, and to deny the existence of objective values,
stressing instead the reality and significance of human freedom and experience.

The approach was developed chiefly in 20th-century Europe,
notably by Martin Heidegger, Jean-Paul Sartre, Albert Camus, and Simone de Beauvoir.

F

fortitude | 'fɔrdə,t(y)ood |
noun

courage in pain or adversity:
she endured her illness with great fortitude.

courage, bravery, endurance, resilience, mettle, moral fiber,
strength of mind, strength of character, strong-mindedness,
backbone, spirit, grit, true grit, doughtiness, steadfastness

* * * *

frame of reference |frɛm əv|
noun

a set of criteria or stated values
in relation to which measurements or judgments can be made:
the observer interprets what he sees in terms of his own cultural frame of reference.

* * * *

freedom | 'frɛdəm |
noun

the power or right to act, speak, or think as one wants without hindrance or restraint:
we do have some freedom of choice | he talks of revoking some of the freedoms.

- absence of subjection to foreign domination or despotic government:
he was a champion of Irish freedom.
- the state of not being imprisoned or enslaved:
the shark thrashed its way to freedom.
- the state of being physically unrestricted and able to move easily:
the shorts have a side split for freedom of movement.
- (freedom from) the state of not being subject to
or affected by (a particular undesirable thing):
government policies to achieve freedom from want.
- the power of self-determination attributed to the will;
the quality of being independent of fate or necessity.
- unrestricted use of something:
the dog is happy having the freedom of the house when we are out.
- archaic familiarity or openness in speech or behavior.

1 a desperate bid for freedom:
liberty, liberation, release, deliverance, delivery, discharge;
literary disenfranchisement; historical manumission.
ANTONYMS captivity.

2 revolution was the only path to freedom:
independence, self-government, self-determination, self-rule, home rule,
sovereignty, nonalignment, autonomy; democracy.
ANTONYMS dependence.

3 freedom from local political accountability:
exemption, immunity, dispensation; impunity.
ANTONYMS liability.

4 freedom to choose your course of treatment:
right, entitlement, privilege, prerogative;
scope, latitude, leeway, flexibility, space, breathing space, room, elbow room;
license, leave, free rein, a free hand, carte blanche, a blank check.
ANTONYMS restriction.

G

gestalt | gə'SHält | (also Gestalt)
noun
(plural gestalten | -'SHältln, -'SHtôltn | or gestalts)
Psychology

an organized whole that is perceived as more than the sum of its parts.

* * * *

God | gäd |
noun

1 (in Christianity and other monotheistic religions)
the creator and ruler of the universe and source of all moral authority;
the supreme being.

2 (god) (in certain other religions) a superhuman being or spirit
worshiped as having power over nature or human fortunes;
a deity: a moon god | an incarnation of the god Vishnu.

- an image, idol, animal, or other object worshiped as divine or symbolizing a god.
 - used as a conventional personification of fate:
he dialed the number and, the gods relenting, got through at once.

ORIGIN Old English, of Germanic origin;
related to Dutch god and German Gott.

* * * *

gravity | 'gravədē |
noun

Physics: the force that attracts a body toward the center of the earth,
or toward any other physical body having mass.
For most purposes Newton's laws of gravity apply,
with minor modifications to take the general theory of relativity into account.

- the degree of intensity of gravity, measured by acceleration.

* * * *

greed | grēd |
noun

intense and selfish desire for something, especially wealth, power, or food.

greed, greediness

1 human greed: avarice, cupidity, acquisitiveness, covetousness, rapacity; materialism, mercenariness; rare pleonexia; informal money-grubbing, affluenza. ANTONYMS generosity.

2 her mouth watered with greed: gluttony, hunger, voracity, insatiability; gourmandism, intemperance, overeating, self-indulgence; informal piggishness. ANTONYMS temperance.

3 their greed for power: desire, appetite, hunger, thirst, craving, longing, lust, yearning, hankering; avidity, eagerness; informal yen, itch. ANTONYMS indifference.

* * * *

grit | grit |
noun

1 small loose particles of stone or sand: she had a bit of grit in her eye.

• [as modifier] (with numeral) indicating the grade of fineness of an abrasive: 220-grit paper.

• (also gritstone) a coarse sandstone: layers of impervious shales and grits.

2 courage and resolve; strength of character: he displayed the true grit of the navy pilot.

verb

(grits, gritting, gritted) [with object]

1 clench (the teeth), especially in order to keep one's resolve when faced with an unpleasant or painful duty:
figurative : Congress must grit its teeth and take action |
(as adjective gritted) : "Not here," he said through gritted teeth.

2 [no object] move with or make a grating sound:
fine red dust that gritted between the teeth.

noun

1 the grit from the paths: sand, dust, dirt; gravel, pebbles, stones.

2 just the grit we're looking for in a candidate:
courage, bravery, pluck, mettle, backbone, spirit, strength of character, strength of will, moral fiber, steel, nerve, fortitude, toughness, hardiness, resolve, resolution, determination, tenacity, perseverance, endurance; informal guts, spunk.

verb

Gina gritted her teeth: clench, clamp together, shut tightly; grind, gnash.

* * * *

gumption | 'gʌmpSH(ə)n |

noun

informal shrewd or spirited initiative and resourcefulness:
she had the gumption to put her foot down and head Dan off from those crazy schemes.

informal we never thought Clarence would have the gumption to stand up to the committee –
and actually get what he wanted:

initiative, resourcefulness, enterprise, ingenuity, imagination;
astuteness, shrewdness, acumen, sense, common sense, wit, mother wit, practicality;
spirit, backbone, pluck, mettle, nerve, courage, wherewithal;
informal get-up-and-go, spunk, oomph, moxie, savvy, horse sense, (street) smarts.

* * * *

guṇa | 'gūṇə |
noun

(in Vedānta) any of the three interdependent modes or qualities
of prakṛiti: sattva, rajas, or tamas.

Guṇa depending on the context means:
"string, thread, strand" or "virtue, merit, excellence" or "quality, peculiarity, attribute, property".

The concept is originally notable as a feature of Sāṃkhya philosophy,
though possibly a later feature of it.

The guṇas are now a key concept in nearly all schools of Hindu philosophy.

There are three guṇas, according to this world view,
that have always been and continue to be present in all things and beings in the world.

These three guṇas are called:
sattva (goodness, constructive, harmonious),
rajas (passion, active, confused),
tamas (darkness, destructive, chaotic).

All of these three guṇas are present in everyone and everything,
it is the proportion that is different, according to Hindu worldview.

The interplay of these guṇas
defines the character of someone or something, of nature,
and determines the progress of life.

H

heaven | 'hevən |
noun

1 a place regarded in various religions as the abode of God (or the gods) and the angels, and of the good after death, often traditionally depicted as being above the sky.

- God (or the gods):

Constantine was persuaded that disunity in the Church was displeasing to heaven.

- Theology a state of being eternally in the presence of God after death.

- used in various exclamations as a substitute for “God”:
heaven knows! | good heavens!

2 (often heavens) literary the sky, especially perceived as a vault in which the sun, moon, stars, and planets are situated:
Galileo used a telescope to observe the heavens.

3 informal a place, state, or experience of supreme bliss:
lying by the pool with a good book is my idea of heaven.

1 the good will have a place in heaven: paradise, nirvana, Zion;
the hereafter, the next world, the next life, Elysium, the Elysian Fields, Valhalla;
literary the empyrean.
ANTONYMS hell, purgatory.

2 a good book is my idea of heaven:
bliss, ecstasy, rapture, contentment, happiness, delight, joy, seventh heaven;
paradise, Utopia, nirvana.
ANTONYMS misery.

3 (the heavens) he observed the heavens:
the sky, the skies, the upper atmosphere, the stratosphere, space;
literary the firmament, the vault of heaven, the blue, the (wild/wide) blue yonder, the welkin,
the empyrean, the azure, the upper regions, the sphere, the celestial sphere.

* * * *

hierophant | 'hī(ə)rə, fant |
noun
(plural hierophant)

a person, especially a priest in ancient Greece,
who interprets sacred mysteries or esoteric principles.

An ancient Greek priest who interpreted sacred mysteries,
especially the priest of the Eleusinian mysteries.

An interpreter of sacred mysteries or arcane knowledge.

One who explains or makes a commentary.

* * * *

hope | həʊp |

noun [mass noun]

1 a feeling of expectation and desire for a particular thing to happen:
he looked through her belongings in the hope of coming across some information |
[count noun] : I had high hopes of making the Olympic team.

- [count noun] a person or thing that may help or save someone:
their only hope is surgery.
- grounds for believing that something good may happen:
he does see some hope for the future.

2 archaic a feeling of trust: our private friendship,
upon hope and affiance whereof, I presume to be your petitioner.

verb [no object]

want something to happen or be the case: he's hoping for an offer of compensation |
[with clause] : I hope that the kids are OK.

- [with infinitive] intend if possible to do something:
we're hoping to address all these issues.

* * * *

hypothesis | hɪ'pəʊθəsɪs |

noun

(plural hypotheses | -,sēz |)

a supposition or proposed explanation made on the basis of limited evidence
as a starting point for further investigation:
professional astronomers attacked him for popularizing an unconfirmed hypothesis.

- Philosophy a proposition made as a basis for reasoning,
without any assumption of its truth.

ORIGIN late 16th century: via late Latin from Greek hypothesis 'foundation',
from hupo 'under' + thesis 'placing'.

his "steady state" hypothesis of the origin of the universe:
theory, theorem, thesis, conjecture, supposition, postulation, postulate,

proposition, premise, assumption; notion, concept, idea, possibility.

I

iconoclast | ɪˈkɑːnəˌklast |
noun

1 a person who attacks cherished beliefs or institutions.

2 a destroyer of images used in religious worship.

- historical a supporter of the 8th- and 9th-century movement in the Byzantine Church which sought to abolish the veneration of icons and other religious images.
- historical a Puritan of the 16th or 17th century.

in terms of the money culture in Washington,
she is iconoclast: critic, skeptic; heretic, unbeliever,
dissident, dissenter, infidel; rebel, renegade, mutineer.

* * * *

idolatry | ɪˈdɒlətri |
noun

worship of idols.

- extreme admiration, love, or reverence for something or someone:
we must not allow our idolatry of art to obscure issues of political significance.

synonyms: idolization, fetishization, fetishism, idol worship, adulation, adoration,
reverence, veneration, glorification, lionization, hero-worshipping
"the prophets railed against idolatry"

* * * *

illumination | ɪˌlʊmɪˈneɪʃ(ə)n |
noun

1 lighting or light:

higher levels of illumination are needed for reading.

- (often illuminations) a display of lights on a building or other structure.

2 the art of illuminating a manuscript.

- an illuminated design in a manuscript.

3 clarification:

these books form the most sustained analysis and illumination of the subject.

- spiritual or intellectual enlightenment.

4 Physics another term for illuminance.

1 a floodlight provided illumination:
light, lighting, radiance, gleam, glow, glare; shining, gleaming, glowing;
brilliance, luminescence; literary illumining, irradiance,
lucency, lambency, effulgence, refulgence.
ANTONYMS darkness.

2 the illumination of a manuscript:
decoration, illustration, embellishment, adornment, ornamentation.

3 these books give illumination on the subject:
clarification, elucidation, explanation, revelation, explication.

4 it was an era of great illumination:
enlightenment, insight, understanding, awareness; learning, education, edification.
ANTONYMS ignorance.

* * * *

immutable | i(m)'myōdāb(ə)l |
adjective

unchanging over time or unable to be changed: an immutable fact.

the subtext of the liturgy had always been God's immutable power:
fixed, set, rigid, inflexible, permanent, established, carved in stone;
unchanging, unchanged, unvarying, unvaried, static,
constant, lasting, enduring, steadfast.
ANTONYMS variable.

* * * *

ineffable | in'efāb(ə)l |
adjective

too great or extreme to be expressed or described in words:
the ineffable natural beauty of the Everglades.

- not to be uttered: the ineffable Hebrew name that gentiles write as Jehovah.

1 the ineffable, surging joy of the Beatles:
indescribable, inexpressible, beyond words, beyond description, begging description;
indefinable, unutterable, untold, unimaginable;
overwhelming, breathtaking, awesome, marvelous, wonderful, staggering, amazing.

2 the ineffable name of God:
unutterable, not to be uttered, not to be spoken, unmentionable, forbidden, taboo.

* * * *

ivory tower | ' ,īv(ə)rē ' ,tou(ə)r |
noun

a state of privileged seclusion or separation
from the facts and practicalities of the real world:
the ivory tower of academia.

* * * *

political correctness | pə'lidəkəl kə'rek(t)nəs |
(also political correctitude)
noun

the avoidance, often considered as taken to extremes,
of forms of expression or action that are perceived to exclude, marginalize,
or insult groups of people who are socially disadvantaged or discriminated against.

J

Jehovah | jə'hōvə |
noun

a form of the Hebrew name of God used in some translations of the Bible.

ORIGIN from medieval Latin Iehouah, Iehoua,
from Hebrew YHWH or JHVH, the consonants of the name of God,
with the inclusion of vowels taken from 'ādōnāy 'my lord';
see also Yahweh, Tetragrammaton.

* * * *

Jesus | 'jēzəs | (also Jesus Christ or Jesus of Nazareth)

the central figure of the Christian religion.

Jesus conducted a mission of preaching and healing (with reported miracles)
in Palestine in about ad 28–30, which is described in the Gospels.
His followers considered him to be the Christ or Messiah and the Son of God,
and belief in his resurrection from the dead is the central tenet of Christianity.

ORIGIN from Christian Latin Iesus, from Greek Iēsous,
from a late Hebrew or Aramaicanalogous formation based on Yēhōšūā' 'Joshua'.

K

karma | 'kɑrmə |
noun

(in Hinduism and Buddhism) the sum of a person's actions
in this and previous states of existence,
viewed as deciding their fate in future existences.

- informal destiny or fate, following as effect from cause.

L

Lao-tzu | ,lä-ō 'tsoō, 'dzə |
(also Laoze | 'tsā, 'dzā |)
(fl. 6th century bc),

Chinese philosopher traditionally regarded as the founder of Taoism
and author of the Tao-te-Ching, its most sacred scripture.

ORIGIN Chinese, literally 'Lao the Master'.

* * * *

light | līt |
noun

the natural agent that stimulates sight and makes things visible:
the light of the sun | [in singular] : the street lamps shed a faint light into the room.

Visible light is electromagnetic radiation whose wavelength falls within the range to which the
human
retina responds, i.e., between about 390 nm (violet light) and 740 nm (red). White
light consists of a
roughly equal mixture of all visible wavelengths, which can be separated to yield the colors of
the
spectrum, as was first demonstrated conclusively by Newton. In the 20th century it has become
apparent that light consists of energy quanta called photons that behave partly like waves
and partly like particles. The velocity of light in a vacuum is 299,792 km per second.

* * * *

love | ləv |

noun

1 an intense feeling of deep affection:
babies fill parents with intense feelings of love | their love for their country.

• a deep romantic or sexual attachment to someone:
they were both in love with her | we were slowly falling in love | it was love at first sight.

• affectionate greetings conveyed to someone on one's behalf.

• a formula for ending an affectionate letter:
take care, lots of love, Judy.

• (Love) a personified figure of love, often represented as Cupid.

2 a great interest and pleasure in something:
his love for football | we share a love of music.

3 a person or thing that one loves: she was the love of his life |
their two great loves are tobacco and whiskey.

- British informal a friendly form of address:
it's all right, love.

- (a love) informal used to express affectionate approval for someone:
don't fret, there's a love.

4 (in tennis, squash, and some other sports)
a score of zero; nil: love fifteen | he was down two sets to love.
[apparently from the phrase play for love (i.e. the love of the game, not for money);
folk etymology has connected the word with French l'oeuf 'egg',
from the resemblance in shape between an egg and a zero.]

verb

[with object] feel a deep romantic or sexual attachment to (someone):
do you love me?

- like very much; find pleasure in:
I'd love a cup of tea, thanks | I just love dancing |
[as adjective, in combination] (-loving) : a fun-loving girl.

noun

1 his friendship with Helen grew into love:
deep affection, fondness, tenderness, warmth, intimacy, attachment, endearment;
devotion, adoration, doting, idolization, worship;
passion, ardor, desire, lust, yearning, infatuation, besottedness.
ANTONYMS hatred.

2 her love for fashion | a love of good food:
liking of/for, enjoyment of, appreciation of/for, taste for, delight for/in,
relish of, passion for, zeal for, appetite for, zest for, enthusiasm for, keenness for,
fondness for, soft spot for, weakness for, bent for, proclivity for, inclination for,
disposition for, partiality for, predilection for, penchant for.

3 their love for their fellow human beings:
compassion, care, caring, regard, solicitude, concern, friendliness, friendship,
kindness, charity, goodwill, sympathy, kindness, altruism, unselfishness,
philanthropy, benevolence, fellow feeling, humanity.

4 he was her one true love:
beloved, loved one, love of one's life, dear, dearest, dear one, darling,
sweetheart, sweet, angel, honey; lover, innamorato, innamorata, amour, paramour.

5 their love will survive:
relationship, love affair, romance, liaison, affair of the heart, amour.

6 my mother sends her love:
best wishes, regards, good wishes, greetings, kind/kindest regards.

verb

1 she loves him:
care very much for, feel deep affection for, hold very dear,
adore, think the world of, be devoted to, dote on, idolize, worship;
be in love with, be infatuated with, be smitten with, be besotted with;
informal be mad/crazy/nuts/wild about, have a crush on, carry a torch for.
ANTONYMS hate.

2 Laura loved painting:
like very much, delight in, enjoy greatly, have a passion for,
take great pleasure in, derive great pleasure from, relish, savor;
have a weakness for, be partial to, have a soft spot for, have a taste for, be taken with;
informal get a kick out of, have a thing about,
be mad/crazy/nuts/wild about, be hooked on, get off on.
ANTONYMS hate.

M

mantra | 'mantrə |
noun

(originally in Hinduism and Buddhism)
a word or sound repeated to aid concentration in meditation.

- a Vedic hymn.
- a statement or slogan repeated frequently:
the environmental mantra that energy has for too long been too cheap.

their newest mantra is "stay connected":
slogan, motto, maxim, catchphrase, catchword, watchword, byword, buzzword, tag (line).

* * * *

mass | mas |
noun

Physics: the quantity of matter which a body contains,
as measured by its acceleration under a given force
or by the force exerted on it by a gravitational field.

* * * *

matter | 'mædər |
noun

physical substance in general, as distinct from mind and spirit;
(in physics) that which occupies space and possesses rest mass, especially as distinct from
energy:
the structure and properties of matter.

* * * *

meditation | ,medə'tāSH(ə)n |
noun

the action or practice of meditating: a life of meditation.

- a written or spoken discourse expressing considered thoughts on a subject:
his later letters are intense meditations on man's exploitation of his fellows.

cultivating the presence of God through meditation:
contemplation, thought, thinking, musing, pondering, consideration, reflection,
deliberation, rumination, brooding, reverie, brown study,
concentration; prayer; formal cogitation.

* * * *

meme | mēm |
noun

an element of a culture or system of behavior
that may be considered to be passed from one individual to another
by nongenetic means, especially imitation.

- a humorous image, video, piece of text, etc.,
that is copied (often with slight variations)
and spread rapidly by Internet users.

* * * *

metaphysics | ,medə'fiziks |
plural noun
[usually treated as singular]

the branch of philosophy that deals with the first principles of things,
including abstract concepts such as being, knowing,
substance, cause, identity, time, and space.

- abstract theory or talk with no basis in reality:
his concept of society as an organic entity is, for market liberals, simply metaphysics.

Metaphysics has two main strands:
that which holds that what exists lies beyond experience (as argued by Plato),
and that which holds that objects of experience constitute the only reality
(as argued by Kant, the logical positivists, and Hume).

Metaphysics has also concerned itself with a discussion
of whether what exists is made of one substance or many,
and whether what exists is inevitable or driven by chance.

* * * *

metaphysical | ,medə'fizək(ə)l |
adjective

1 relating to metaphysics: the essentially metaphysical question of the nature of the mind.

- based on abstract (typically, excessively abstract) reasoning:
an empiricist rather than a metaphysical view of law.
- transcending physical matter or the laws of nature:
Good and Evil are inextricably linked in a metaphysical battle across space and time.

2 of or characteristic of the metaphysical poets.

1 metaphysical questions: abstract, theoretical, conceptual,

notional, philosophical, speculative, intellectual, academic.

2 Good and Evil are inextricably linked in a metaphysical battle:
transcendental, spiritual, supernatural, paranormal.

* * * *

moksha | 'mōkSHə |
noun

(in Hinduism and Jainism) release from the cycle of rebirth impelled by the law of karma.

- the transcendent state attained as a result of being released from the cycle of rebirth.

* * * *

molecule | 'mälə,kyool |
noun

Chemistry: a group of atoms bonded together,
representing the smallest fundamental unit of a chemical compound
that can take part in a chemical reaction.

* * * *

moment | 'mōmənt |
noun

1 a very brief period of time:
she was silent for a moment before replying | a few moments later he returned to the office.

- an exact point in time:
she would always remember the moment they met.
- an appropriate time for doing something; an opportunity:
I was waiting for the right moment.
- a particular stage in something's development or in a course of events:
one of the great moments in aviation history.

2 formal importance:
the issues were of little moment to the electorate.

3 Physics a turning effect produced by a force acting at a distance on an object.

- the magnitude of a turning effect produced by a force acting at a distance,
expressed as the product of the force and the distance from its line of action to a given point.

4 Statistics a quantity that expresses the average or expected value
of the first, second, third, or fourth power of the deviation of each component
of a frequency distribution from some given value, typically mean or zero.

The first moment is the mean, the second moment the variance,
the third moment the skew, and the fourth moment the kurtosis.

1 he thought for a moment:
little while, short time, bit, minute, instant, second, split second; informal sec.

2 the moment they met:
point (in time), time, hour.

3 formal issues of little moment:
importance, import, significance, consequence, note, weight, concern, interest.

* * * *

moral | 'môrəl |
adjective

1 concerned with the principles of right and wrong behavior
and the goodness or badness of human character:
the moral dimensions of medical intervention | a moral judgment.

- concerned with or derived from the code of interpersonal behavior
that is considered right or acceptable in a particular society:
an individual's ambitions may get out of step with the general moral code |
the moral obligation of society to do something about the inner city's problems.

- [attributive] examining the nature of ethics
and the foundations of good and bad character and conduct:
moral philosophers.

2 holding or manifesting high principles for proper conduct:
he prides himself on being a highly moral and ethical person.

noun

1 a lesson, especially one concerning what is right or prudent,
that can be derived from a story, a piece of information, or an experience:
the moral of this story was that one must see the beauty in what one has.

2 (morals) a person's standards of behavior or beliefs concerning
what is and is not acceptable for them to do: the corruption of public morals |
they believe addicts have no morals and cannot be trusted.

adjective

1 moral issues: ethical, social, having to do with right and wrong.

2 a moral man: virtuous, good, righteous, upright,
upstanding, high-minded, principled, honorable, honest, just,

noble, incorruptible, scrupulous, respectable, decent, clean-living, law-abiding.
ANTONYMS dishonorable.

3 moral support: psychological, emotional, mental.

noun

1 the moral of the story: lesson, message,
meaning, significance, signification, import, point, teaching.

2 he has no morals: moral code, code of ethics,
(moral) values, principles, standards, (sense of) morality, scruples.

N

natural science | 'nætʃ(ə)rəl 'saɪəns |
noun

(usually natural sciences)

a branch of science which deals with the physical world,
e.g. physics, chemistry, geology, biology.

- the branch of knowledge which deals with the study of the physical world.

* * * *

nature | 'nāCHər |
noun

the phenomena of the physical world collectively,
including plants, animals, the landscape, and other features and products of the earth,
as opposed to humans or human creations: the breathtaking beauty of nature.

- the physical force regarded as causing and regulating these phenomena:
it is impossible to change the laws of nature.

* * * *

negation | nə'gāSH(ə)n |
noun

1 the contradiction or denial of something:
there should be confirmation – or negation – of the findings.

Grammar denial of the truth of a clause or sentence,
typically involving the use of a negative word
(e.g., not, no, never) or a word or affix
with negative force (e.g., nothing, non-).

Logic a proposition whose assertion
specifically denies the truth of another proposition:
the negation of A is, briefly, “not A.”

Mathematics inversion:
these formulae and their negations.

2 the absence or opposite of something actual or positive:
evil is not merely the negation of goodness.

* * * *

nihilism | 'nīə,lizəm, 'nēə,lizəm |
noun

the rejection of all religious and moral principles,
in the belief that life is meaningless.

- Philosophy extreme skepticism maintaining that nothing in the world has a real existence.
 - historical the doctrine of an extreme Russian revolutionary party c. 1900 which found nothing to approve of in the established social order.

she could not accept Bacon's nihilism, his insistence that man is a futile being:
skepticism, negativity, cynicism, pessimism; disbelief, unbelief, agnosticism, atheism.

* * * *

nirvana | nər'vānə, nɪr'vānə |
noun

(in Buddhism) a transcendent state in which there is neither suffering, desire, nor sense of self,
and the subject is released from the effects of karma and the cycle of death and rebirth.
It represents the final goal of Buddhism.

- another term for moksha.
- a state of perfect happiness; an ideal or idyllic place:
Hollywood's dearest dream of small-town nirvana.

there are no shortcuts to nirvana:

paradise, heaven; bliss, ecstasy, joy, peace, serenity, tranquility; enlightenment.
ANTONYMS hell.

* * * *

now | nou |
adverb

1 at the present time or moment: where are you living now? |
it's the most popular style of jazz right now | not now, I'm late |
[after preposition] : they should be back by now.

- at the time directly following the present moment; immediately:
if we leave now we can be home by ten | I'd rather do it now than leave it till later.
- under the present circumstances; as a result of something that has recently happened:
it is now clear that we should not pursue this policy |
I didn't receive the letter, but it hardly matters now.
- on this further occasion, typically as the latest in a series of annoying situations or events:
what do you want now?
 - used to emphasize a particular length of time:

they've been married four years now.

- (in a narrative or account of past events) at the time spoken of or referred to:
she was nineteen now, and she was alone | it had happened three times now.

2 used, especially in conversation,
to draw attention to a particular statement or point in a narrative:
now, my first impulse was to run away | I don't like Scotch.
Now, if it had been Irish Whiskey you'd offered me.

3 used in or as a request, instruction, or question,
typically to give a slight emphasis to one's words:
we can hardly send her back, now can we? |
run along now | now, if you'll excuse me?

- used when pausing or considering one's next words:
let me see now, oh yes, I remember.

4 used at the end of an ironic question echoing a previous statement:
“Mom says for you to give me some of your stamps.” “Does she now?”

1 I'm extremely busy now:
at the moment, at present, at the present (time/moment),
at this moment in time, currently, presently.

2 television is now the main source of news:
nowadays, today, these days, in this day and age; in the present climate.

3 you must leave now:
at once, straightaway, right away, right now, this minute,
this instant, immediately, instantly, directly, without further ado, promptly, without delay,
as soon as possible; informal pronto, straight off, ASAP.

O

oligarchy | 'älə, ɡärkē |
noun
(plural oligarchies)

a small group of people having control of a country, organization, or institution:
the ruling oligarchy of military men around the president.

- a country governed by an oligarchy:
the English aristocratic oligarchy of the 19th century.
- government by an oligarchy.

P

parochial | pə' rɔkēəl |
adjective

- having a limited or narrow outlook or scope:
this worldview seems incredibly naive and parochial.

she was constantly challenging their parochial approach to education:
narrow-minded, small-minded, provincial, narrow, small-town,
conservative, illiberal, intolerant; informal jerkwater.

ANTONYMS broad-minded.

* * * *

passion | 'paSHən |
noun

1 strong and barely controllable emotion:
a man of impetuous passion.

- a state or outburst of strong emotion:
oratory in which he gradually works himself up into a passion.

• intense sexual love:
their all-consuming passion for each other | she nurses a passion for Thomas.

- an intense desire or enthusiasm for something:
the English have a passion for gardens.

• a thing arousing enthusiasm:
modern furniture is a particular passion of Bill's.

2 (the Passion) the suffering and death of Jesus:
meditations on the Passion of Christ.

- a narrative of the Passion from any of the Gospels.

• a musical setting of any of the narratives of the Passion:
an aria from Bach's St. Matthew Passion.

1 the passion of activists: fervor, ardor, enthusiasm, eagerness, zeal, zealousness,
vigor, fire, fieriness, energy, fervency, animation, spirit, spiritedness, fanaticism.

ANTONYMS apathy.

2 he worked himself up into a passion: (blind) rage, fit of anger/temper, temper, towering
rage, tantrum, fury, frenzy.

3 hot with passion: love, (sexual) desire, lust, ardor, infatuation, lasciviousness, lustfulness.

4 his passion for football:
enthusiasm, love, mania, fascination, obsession, fanaticism,
fixation, compulsion, appetite, addiction; informal thing.

5 French literature is my passion:
obsession, preoccupation, craze, mania, hobbyhorse.

6 the Passion of Christ:
crucifixion, suffering, agony, martyrdom.

* * * *

patience | 'pāSHəns |
noun

the capacity to accept or tolerate delay, trouble, or suffering without getting angry or upset:
you can find bargains if you have the patience to sift through the dross.

1 she tried everyone's patience:
forbearance, tolerance, restraint, self-restraint, stoicism;
calmness, composure, equanimity, imperturbability, phlegm, understanding, indulgence.

2 a task requiring patience:
perseverance, persistence, endurance, tenacity, assiduity, application,
staying power, doggedness, determination, resolve, resolution, resoluteness.

* * * *

pattern | 'pat(ə)n |

noun

1 a repeated decorative design: a neat blue herringbone pattern.

- an arrangement or design regularly found in comparable objects:
the house had been built on the usual pattern.

- a regular and intelligible form or sequence
discernible in the way in which something happens or is done:
a complicating factor is the change in working patterns | the murders followed a repeated
pattern |
the school is located a few kilometers away and is run on the pattern of other army schools.

2 a model or design used as a guide in needlework and other crafts:
make a pattern for the zigzag edge.

- a set of instructions to be followed in making a sewn or knitted item:
the bag contained wool, needles, and a pattern for a sweater.

- a wooden or metal model from which a mould is made for a casting:
to make a split mould a wooden pattern has to be made first.

- a sample of cloth or wallpaper: [as modifier] :
it is easier to choose carpets from the roll than from a pattern book.

3 an example for others to follow: he set the pattern for subsequent study.

verb [with object]

1 (usually as adjective patterned) decorate with a recurring design:
rosebud patterned wallpapers.

2 give a regular or intelligible form to:
the brain not only receives information, but interprets and patterns it.

- (pattern something on/after) give something a form based on that of (something else):
the clothing is patterned on athletes' wear.

noun

1 the pattern on the wallpaper:
design, decoration, motif, marking, ornament, ornamentation.

2 the patterns of ant behavior:
system, order, arrangement, form, method, structure, scheme, plan, format, framework.

3 this would set the pattern for a generation:
model, example, criterion, standard, basis, point of reference, gauge, norm,
yardstick, touchstone, benchmark; blueprint, archetype, prototype.

4 textile patterns: sample, specimen, swatch.
verb someone else is patterning my life:
shape, influence, model, fashion, mold, style, determine, control.

verb

someone else is patterning my life:
shape, influence, model, fashion, mold, style, determine, control.

* * * *

perception | pər'sepSH(ə)n |
noun

the ability to see, hear, or become aware of something through the senses:
the normal limits to human perception.

- the state of being or process of becoming aware of something through the senses:

the perception of pain.

- a way of regarding, understanding, or interpreting something; a mental impression:
Hollywood's perception of the tastes of the American public |
we need to challenge many popular perceptions of old age.

- intuitive understanding and insight:

“He wouldn't have accepted,” said my mother with unusual perception.

- Psychology & Zoology the neurophysiological processes, including memory, by which an organism becomes aware of and interprets external stimuli.

1 our perception of our own limitations:

recognition, awareness, consciousness, appreciation, realization, knowledge, grasp, understanding, comprehension, apprehension; formal cognizance.

2 popular perceptions of old

age: impression, idea, conception, notion, thought, belief, judgment, estimation.

3 he talks with great perception:

insight, perceptiveness, percipience, perspicacity, understanding, sharpness, sharp-wittedness, intelligence, intuition, cleverness, incisiveness, trenchancy, astuteness, shrewdness, acuteness, acuity, discernment, sensitivity, penetration, thoughtfulness, profundity; formal perspicuity.

* * * *

philosophy |fə'läsəfē|

noun

(pl. philosophies)

the study of the fundamental nature of knowledge, reality, and existence, especially when considered as an academic discipline.

See also natural philosophy.

- a particular system of philosophical thought: Schopenhauer's philosophy.
- the study of the theoretical basis of a particular branch of knowledge or experience: the philosophy of science.
 - a theory or attitude held by a person or organization that acts as a guiding principle for behavior:
don't expect anything and you won't be disappointed, that's my philosophy.

* * * *

physics | 'fiziks |

plural noun

[treated as singular]

the branch of science concerned with the nature and properties of matter and energy.
The subject matter of physics, distinguished from that of chemistry and biology,
includes mechanics, heat, light and other radiation, sound,
electricity, magnetism, and the structure of atoms.

- the physical properties and phenomena of something: the physics of plasmas.

* * * *

pride | prīd |

noun

1 a feeling or deep pleasure or satisfaction derived from one's own achievements,
the achievements of those with whom one is closely associated,
or from qualities or possessions that are widely admired:
the team was bursting with pride after recording a sensational victory |
a woman who takes great pride in her appearance.

- a person or thing that is the object or source of a feeling or deep pleasure or satisfaction:
the swimming pool is the pride of the community.

- literary the best state or condition of something; the prime:
in the pride of youth.

2 consciousness of one's own dignity:
he swallowed his pride and asked for help.

- the quality of having an excessively high opinion of oneself or one's importance:
the sin of pride.

3 a group of lions forming a social unit.

verb

(pride oneself on/upon) be especially proud of (a particular quality or skill):
she'd always prided herself on her ability to deal with a crisis.

1 their triumphs were a source of pride:
self-esteem, dignity, honor, self-respect, self-worth, self-regard, pride in oneself.
ANTONYMS shame.

2 take pride in a good job well done:
pleasure, joy, delight, gratification, fulfillment, satisfaction, a sense of achievement.

3 he refused her offer out of pride:

arrogance, vanity, self-importance, hubris, conceit, conceitedness, self-love, self-adulation, self-admiration, narcissism, egotism, superciliousness, haughtiness, snobbery, snobbishness; informal big-headedness; literary vainglory.
ANTONYMS modesty, humility.

4 the bull is the pride of the herd:
best, finest, top, cream, pick, choice, prize, glory, jewel in the crown.
ANTONYMS dregs.

5 the rose-covered trellis was the pride of the gardener:
source of satisfaction, pride and joy, treasured possession, joy, delight.

Q

quantum | 'kwän(t)əm |
noun
(plural quanta | -tə |)

Physics: a discrete quantity of energy proportional in magnitude to the frequency of the radiation it represents.

- an analogous discrete amount of any other physical quantity, such as momentum or electric charge.

* * * *

quantum mechanics | 'kwän(t)əm mə'kæniks |
plural noun
[treated as singular]

Physics: the branch of mechanics that deals with the mathematical description of the motion and interaction of subatomic particles, incorporating the concepts of quantization of energy, wave-particle duality, the uncertainty principle, and the correspondence principle.

R

radiation | ,rādē' āSH(ə)n |
noun

Physics: the emission of energy as electromagnetic waves or as moving subatomic particles, especially high-energy particles which cause ionization.

- the energy transmitted by radiation, as heat, light, electricity, etc.

* * * *

religion | rə'lijən |
noun

the belief in and worship of a superhuman controlling power, especially a personal God or gods:
ideas about the relationship between science and religion.

- a particular system of faith and worship: the world's great religions.
- a pursuit or interest to which someone ascribes supreme importance: consumerism is the new religion.

the freedom to practice their own religion:
faith, belief, worship, creed; sect, church, cult, denomination.

* * * *

religious | rə'lijəs |
adjective

relating to or believing in a religion:
both men were deeply religious, intelligent, and moralistic | religious music.

- (of a belief or practice) forming part of someone's thought about or worship of a divine being: he has strong religious convictions.
- belonging or relating to a monastic order or other group of people who are united by their practice of religion: religious houses were built on ancient pagan sites.
- treated or regarded with a devotion and scrupulousness appropriate to worship: I have a religious aversion to reading manuals.

1 a religious person: devout, pious, reverent, godly, God-fearing, churchgoing, faithful, devoted, committed.
ANTONYMS atheistic, irreverent.

2 religious beliefs: spiritual, theological, scriptural, doctrinal,

ecclesiastical, church, faith-based, churchly, holy, divine, sacred.
ANTONYMS secular.

3 religious attention to detail:
scrupulous, conscientious, meticulous, sedulous, punctilious, strict, rigorous, close.
ANTONYMS slapdash.

CHOOSE THE RIGHT WORD

religious, devout, pious

Religious basically means ‘relating to a religion’ (the patriotic and religious duty of any Jew) or ‘believing in a religion’ (the word is regarded by many religious people with considerable disapproval), and both senses are neither critical nor approving. Only in the second sense can
religious

be used after the verb to be, or be qualified by an adverb, to express the degree of someone's commitment (he wasn't a churchgoer, but very religious). Sometimes it is used in an extended
sense

to suggest that someone attaches particular importance to a secular object or pursuit; there may
be
a critical suggestion that such devotion is misplaced (he always had a religious obsession with fame).

Devout is used to indicate a deep and genuine religious commitment (he was a devout Quaker and would not allow a pub in the village), and is an approving word. It is also used to convey
total

or uncritical enthusiasm for or commitment to a secular object (a devout soccer fan).

Pious, too, can convey religious commitment (donations to the Church from pious laymen) but is now mainly used pejoratively to denote hypocritical religiosity (I know what's under that pious face of yours).

* * * *

republic | rə'pʌblɪk |

noun

a state in which supreme power is held by the people and their elected representatives, and which has an elected or nominated president rather than a monarch.

- archaic a group with a certain equality between its members.

* * * *

resilience | rə'zɪljəns | (also resiliency)

noun

1 the capacity to recover quickly from difficulties; toughness:
the often remarkable resilience of so many British institutions.

2 the ability of a substance or object to spring back into shape;
elasticity: nylon is excellent in wearability and resilience.

* * * *

rhetoric | 'redərɪk |
noun

the art of effective or persuasive speaking or writing,
especially the use of figures of speech and other compositional techniques.

- language designed to have a persuasive or impressive effect on its audience,
but often regarded as lacking in sincerity or meaningful content:
all we have from the Opposition is empty rhetoric.

1 a form of rhetoric: oratory, eloquence, command of language, way with words.

2 empty rhetoric: bombast, turgidity, grandiloquence, magniloquence,
pomposity, extravagant language, purple prose;
wordiness, verbosity, prolixity; informal hot air; rare fustian.

* * * *

rut | rət |
noun

1 a long deep track made by the repeated passage of the wheels of vehicles.

2 a habit or pattern of behavior that has become dull and unproductive but is hard to change:
the administration was stuck in a rut and was losing its direction.

1 the car bumped across the ruts:
furrow, groove, trough, ditch, hollow, pothole, crater.

2 he was stuck in a rut:
boring routine, humdrum existence, habit, dead end.

S

satori | sə'tôre |
noun

Buddhism sudden enlightenment: the road that leads to satori.

* * * *

secular | 'sekyələr |
adjective

- 1 denoting attitudes, activities, or other things that have no religious or spiritual basis:
secular buildings | secular moral theory. Contrasted with sacred.
- 2 Christian Church (of clergy) not subject to or bound by religious rule;
not belonging to or living in a monastic or other order. Contrasted with regular.
- 3 Astronomy of or denoting slow changes in the motion of the sun or planets.
- 4 Economics (of a fluctuation or trend) occurring or persisting over an indefinitely long period:
there is evidence that the slump is not cyclical but secular.
- 5 occurring once every century or similarly long period
(used especially in reference to celebratory games in ancient Rome).

secular music:
nonreligious, areligious, lay, temporal, worldly, earthly, profane; formal laic.
ANTONYMS holy, religious.

* * * *

science | 'sīəns |
noun

the intellectual and practical activity encompassing the systematic study
of the structure and behavior of the physical and natural world
through observation and experiment: the world of science and technology.

- a particular area of science: veterinary science | the agricultural sciences.
- a systematically organized body of knowledge on a particular subject: the science of
criminology.
- archaic knowledge of any kind.

* * * *

scripture | 'skripCHər |
noun

(often Scripture or Scriptures) the sacred writings of Christianity contained in the Bible:
passages of scripture | the fundamental teachings of the scriptures.

- the sacred writings of another religion.

he appeals solely to scripture for his authority:
sacred text, Holy Writ, the Bible, the Holy Bible, the Gospel,
the Good Book, the Word of God, the Book of Books.

* * * *

serendipity | ,serən'dipədē |
noun

the occurrence and development of events by chance in a happy or beneficial way:
a fortunate stroke of serendipity | a series of small serendipities.

the consequence of serendipity is sometimes a brilliant discovery:
(happy) chance, (happy) accident, fluke;
luck, good luck, good fortune, fortuity, providence; happy coincidence.

* * * *

solipsism | 'säləp,sizəm |
noun

the view or theory that the self is all that can be known to exist.

* * * *

soul | sōl |
noun

1 the spiritual or immaterial part of a human being or animal, regarded as immortal.

- a person's moral or emotional nature or sense of identity:
in the depths of her soul, she knew he would betray her.

2 emotional or intellectual energy or intensity,
especially as revealed in a work of art or an artistic performance:
their interpretation lacked soul.

- African-American culture or ethnic pride.

- short for soul music.

3 the essence or embodiment of a specified quality:
he was the soul of discretion | brevity is the soul of wit.

- an individual person: I'll never tell a soul.
- a person regarded with affection or pity: she's a nice old soul.

1 seeing the soul through the eyes:
spirit, psyche, (inner) self, inner being, life force, vital force;
individuality, makeup, subconscious, anima;
Philosophy pneuma; Hinduism atman.

2 he is the soul of discretion:
embodiment, personification, incarnation, epitome, quintessence,
essence; model, exemplification, exemplar, image, manifestation.

3 not a soul in sight:
person, human being, individual, man, woman, mortal, creature.

4 their music lacked soul:
inspiration, feeling, emotion, passion, animation, intensity,
fervor, ardor, enthusiasm, warmth, energy, vitality, spirit.

* * * *

sound | sound |
noun

vibrations that travel through the air or another medium
and can be heard when they reach a person's or animal's ear:
light travels faster than sound.

* * * *

speculation | ,spekyə' lāSH(ə)n |
noun

the forming of a theory or conjecture without firm evidence:
there has been widespread speculation that he plans to quit
| this is pure speculation on my part | these are only speculations.

his resignation fuelled speculation of an imminent cabinet reshuffle:
conjecture, theorizing, hypothesizing, supposition, guesswork; talk;
theory, hypothesis, thesis, postulation, guess, surmise, opinion, notion;
prediction, forecast; informal guesstimate.

* * * *

spiritual | 'spiriCH(oo)əl |

adjective

1 relating to or affecting the human spirit or soul as opposed to material or physical things:
I'm responsible for his spiritual welfare | the spiritual values of life.

- (of a person) not concerned with material values or pursuits.

2 relating to religion or religious belief: the tribe's spiritual leader.

noun
(also Negro spiritual)

a religious song of a kind associated with black Christians of the southern US,
and thought to derive from the combination of European hymns
and African musical elements by black slaves.

1 your spiritual self: nonmaterial, incorporeal, intangible;
inner, mental, psychological; transcendent, ethereal, otherworldly,
mystic, mystical, metaphysical; rare extramundane.

ANTONYMS physical.

2 spiritual writings: religious, sacred, divine, holy,
nonsecular, church, ecclesiastical, faith-based, devotional.

ANTONYMS secular.

T

Tao | dou, tou | (also Dao)

Noun

(in Chinese philosophy) the absolute principle underlying the universe, combining within itself the principles of yin and yang and signifying the way, or code of behavior, that is in harmony with the natural order.

The interpretation of Tao in the Tao-te-Ching developed into the philosophical religion of Taoism.

ORIGIN Chinese, literally '(right) way'.

* * * *

Tetragrammaton | ,tetrə'gramə,tän |

noun

the Hebrew name of God transliterated in four letters as YHWH or JHVH and articulated as Yahweh or Jehovah.

ORIGIN Greek, neuter of tetragrammatos 'having four letters', from tetra- 'four' + gramma, grammat- 'letter'.

* * * *

theism | 'THĒ,izəm |

noun

belief in the existence of a god or gods, especially belief in one god as creator of the universe, intervening in it and sustaining a personal relation to his creatures. Compare with deism.

* * * *

truth | trūTH |

noun

(plural truths | trūTHz, trūTHs |)

the quality or state of being true: he had to accept the truth of her accusation.

- (also the truth) that which is true or in accordance with fact or reality: tell me the truth | she found out the truth about him.
- a fact or belief that is accepted as true: the emergence of scientific truths.

1 he doubted the truth of her statement:
veracity, truthfulness, verity, sincerity, candor, honesty;
accuracy, correctness, validity, factuality, authenticity.
ANTONYMS dishonesty, falseness.

2 it's the truth, I swear: what actually happened, the case, so;
the gospel (truth), the honest truth.

ANTONYMS lies.

3 truth is stranger than fiction: fact(s), reality, real life, actuality.

ANTONYMS fiction.

4 scientific truths: fact, verity, certainty, certitude; law, principle.

ANTONYMS lie, falsehood.

ORIGIN Old English trīewth, trēowth 'faithfulness, constancy' (see true, -th2).

U

unfathomable | ,ən'faʊ̄həməb(ə)l |
adjective

1 incapable of being fully explored or understood:
her gray eyes were dark with some unfathomable emotion.

2 (of water or a natural feature) impossible to measure the extent of.

unfathomable mysteries:
inscrutable, incomprehensible, enigmatic, indecipherable, impenetrable,
obscure, esoteric, mysterious, mystifying, deep, profound.
ANTONYMS penetrable.

* * * *

utilitarianism | yoō,tilə'terēə,nizəm |
noun

the doctrine that actions are right if they are useful or for the benefit of a majority.

- the doctrine that an action is right insofar as it promotes happiness,
and that the greatest happiness of the greatest number
should be the guiding principle of conduct.

V

value | 'valyoō |

noun

1 the regard that something is held to deserve;
the importance, worth, or usefulness of something:
your support is of great value.

- the material or monetary worth of something: prints seldom rise in value |
equipment is included up to a total value of \$500.

- the worth of something compared to the price paid or asked for it:
at \$12.50 the book is a good value.

2 (values) a person's principles or standards of behavior;
one's judgment of what is important in life:
they internalize their parents' rules and values.

3 the numerical amount denoted by an algebraic term;
a magnitude, quantity, or number: the mean value of x |
an accurate value for the mass of Venus.

4 Music the relative duration of the sound signified by a note.

5 Linguistics the meaning of a word or other linguistic unit.

- the quality or tone of a spoken sound; the sound represented by a letter.

6 the relative degree of lightness or darkness of a particular color:
the artist has used adjacent color values as the landscape recedes.

verb (values, valuing, valued) [with object]

1 estimate the monetary worth of (something): his estate was valued at \$45,000.

2 consider (someone or something) to be important or beneficial;
have a high opinion of: she had come to value her privacy and independence.

noun

1 houses exceeding \$250,000 in value:
price, cost, worth; market price, monetary value, face value.

2 the value of adequate preparation cannot be understated:
worth, usefulness, advantage, benefit, gain, profit,
good, help, merit, helpfulness, avail;

importance, significance.

3 society's values are passed on to us as children:
principles, ethics, moral code, morals, standards, code of behavior.

verb

1 his estate was valued at \$345,000:
evaluate, assess, estimate, appraise, price, put/set a price on.

2 she valued his opinion: think highly of, have a high opinion of,
hold in high regard, rate highly, esteem, set (great) store by,
put stock in, appreciate, respect; prize, cherish, treasure.

* * * *

vanity | 'vanədē |
noun
(plural vanities)

1 excessive pride in or admiration of one's own appearance or achievements:
it flattered his vanity to think I was in love with him |
the personal vanities and ambitions of politicians.

- [as modifier] denoting a person or company that publishes works at the author's expense:
a vanity press.

2 the quality of being worthless or futile: the vanity of human wishes.

3 North American a dressing table.

- US a bathroom unit consisting of a washbasin typically set into a counter with a cabinet
beneath.

1 she had none of the vanity often associated with beautiful women:
conceit, narcissism, self-love, self-admiration, self-absorption, self-regard, egotism;
pride, arrogance, boastfulness, cockiness, swagger, rodomontade;
informal big-headedness; literary vainglory.
ANTONYMS modesty.

2 the vanity of all desires of the will:
futility, uselessness, pointlessness, worthlessness, fruitlessness.

W

wisdom |'wɪzdəm|
noun

the quality of having experience, knowledge, and good judgment;
the quality of being wise.

- the soundness of an action or decision with regard to the application of experience, knowledge, and good judgment: some questioned the wisdom of building the dam so close to an active volcano.
- the body of knowledge and principles that develops within a specified society or period: the traditional farming wisdom of India.

wisdom, understanding, knowledge, sense, insight, perception, astuteness, intelligence, acumen, prudence, sagacity, good judgment, penetration.

Y

Yahweh | 'yā, wā |
(also Yahveh | -, vā, -, ve |)
noun

a form of the Hebrew name of God used in the Bible.

The name came to be regarded by Jews (c. 300 bc) as too sacred to be spoken,
and the vowel sounds are uncertain.

ORIGIN from Hebrew YHWH with added vowels;
compare with Jehovah. See also Tetragrammaton.

Z