

Theme 6: Non-Western traditions and perspectives

This theme explores some philosophical understandings about individuals, their relationship to other living and non-living things, and the nature and scope of social or political involvement, from the perspectives of a number of non-Western traditions. It involves a philosophical consideration and evaluation of some of the fundamental and traditional beliefs of these perspectives, including such issues as:

- the changing nature of **hierarchies** in society;
- the impact of **materialism** on the **metaphysical**;
- the **interrelationship** of the non-living and living;
- evolution of **identity**; the ethical consequences of self-extinction; and
- the dilemma of different notions of **peace and justice** in multicultural environments.

This analysis encourages a critical assessment of how these beliefs and traditions are expressed in the contemporary, multicultural world.

This theme allows students to **investigate one or more non-Western tradition(s)**. Some of these traditions could include: Indian traditions (for example, Buddhism, Hinduism, Jainism), Chinese traditions (for example, Taoism, Confucianism), African traditions (for example, Kongo, Ifa, Vodun, Orisha), Japanese traditions (for example, Shinto, Tenrikyo), Australasian traditions (for example, Maori, Aboriginal), Native North, South and Central American traditions (for example, Hopi, Inuit, Mayan, Aztec, Incan).

While the traditions of Judaism, Christianity and Islam are excluded from detailed investigation, reference to their influence on non-Western traditions and perspectives may be acknowledged.

Possible topics for study

The individual

- The self/non-self
- Subjectivity/objectivity
- Selflessness
- Identity, self-fulfillment, self-denial
- Self-expression versus self-extinction
- The journey of the self

Ethics

- The nature of human and non-human beings
- The distinction between living and non-living objects; the scope of the animate/inanimate
- Relations to other beings/objects
- The meanings of life; moral/ethical possibilities

Society and culture

- Adaptation and coexistence with modern societies/cultures
- Relevance in political, economic, social and cultural contexts
- The community/the collective
- The role of culture on knowledge, meaning and value