

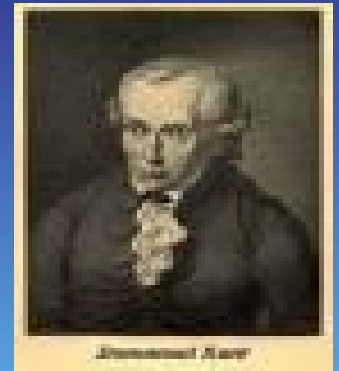
# Cultural relativism

## Case against

- Because two societies *do* have different moral views doesn't mean they *ought to* have different views
- Doesn't explain how moral guidelines are determined
- Doesn't explain how guidelines evolve
- Provides no way out for cultures in conflict
- Because many practices are acceptable does not mean any cultural practice is acceptable (many/any fallacy)
- Societies do, in fact, share certain core values
- Only indirectly based on reason
- Not a workable ethical theory

### 3. Divine command theory *(the virtue approach)*

- Good actions: those aligned with God's will
- Bad actions: those contrary to God's will
- Holy books reveal God's will.
- We should use holy books as moral decision-making guides.



## 4. Kantianism *(the rights approach)*

- Good will: the desire to do the right thing
- Immanuel Kant: Only thing in the world good without qualification is good will.
- Reason should cultivate desire to do right thing.

# Kantianism

## Case for

- Rational
- Produces universal moral guidelines
- Treats all persons as moral equals
- Workable ethical theory

## Case against

- Sometimes no rule adequately characterizes an action.
- There is no way to resolve a conflict between rules.
- Kantianism allows no exceptions to moral laws.



# 5. Act Utilitarianism



- Jeremy Bentham and John Stuart Mill, 19<sup>th</sup> century
- The best ethical course of action is the one that brings the greatest good for the greatest number
  - An action is good if it benefits someone
  - An action is bad if it harms someone
- Utility: tendency of an object to produce happiness or prevent unhappiness for an individual or a community
  - Happiness = advantage = benefit = good = pleasure
  - Unhappiness = disadvantage = cost = evil = pain
- **Principle of Utility** (The Greatest Happiness Principle)
  - An action is right (or wrong) to the extent that it increases (or decreases) the total happiness of the affected parties.

# Act Utilitarianism-Continued

- Act utilitarianism applies Principle of Utility to individual actions
- Act utilitarianism
  - Add up change in happiness of all affected beings
  - Sum  $> 0$ , action is good
  - Sum  $< 0$ , action is bad

# Act Utilitarianism

## Case for

- Focuses on happiness
- Down-to-earth (practical)
- Comprehensive
- Workable ethical theory

## Case against

- Unclear whom to include in calculations
- Too much work
- Ignores our innate sense of duty
- Susceptible to the problem of moral luck

# 6. Rule utilitarianism

- We ought to adopt moral rules which, if followed by everyone, will lead to the greatest increase in total happiness
- Rule utilitarianism applies Principle of Utility to moral rules



# Rule utilitarianism

## Case for

- Compared to act utilitarianism, it is easier to perform the utilitarian calculus.
- Not every moral decision requires performing utilitarian calculus.
- Moral rules survive exceptional situations
- Avoids the problem of moral luck
- Workable ethical theory

# Rule utilitarianism

## Case against

- All consequences must be measured on a single scale.
- Utilitarianism ignores the problem of an unjust distribution of good consequences.
- *Utilitarianism does **not** always mean “the greatest good of the greatest number”*
- *That requires a principle of justice*
- *What happens when a conflict arises between the Principle of Utility and a principle of justice?*

# 7. Social contract theory

## *(The Common Good Approach)*



- Thomas Hobbes
  - “State of nature”
  - We implicitly accept a social contract
    - Establishment of moral rules to govern relations among citizens
    - Government capable of enforcing these rules
- Jean-Jacques Rousseau
  - In ideal society, no one above rules
  - That prevents society from enacting bad rules

# Social contract theory

## Case for

- Framed in language of rights
- Explains why people act in self-interest without common agreement
- Provides clear analysis of certain citizen/government problems
- Workable ethical theory

## Case against

- No one signed contract
- Some actions have multiple characterizations
- Conflicting rights problem
- May unjustly treat people who cannot uphold contract



## ➤ Applied Ethics

Applied ethics extends these arguments about principle to particular areas of concern.

Applied to medicine = “medical ethics” (or “bioethics”)

Applied to commerce = “business ethics”

Applied to the press = “journalism ethics”

Applied to engineering = “engineering ethics”

Applied to environment = “environmental ethics,” and so on.

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- **Ethics** = the study of good and bad, right and wrong
  - **Ethical standards** = criteria that help differentiate right from wrong
  - **Environmental ethics** = the study of ethical questions regarding human interactions with the environment

# What is Sustainability?

- **Sustainability-** meeting the needs of the present without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their needs. It addresses issues of social equity and economic development as well as ecological indicators.
- connects to our children and our children's children
- Christianity, Judaism, Hinduism, Islam and other want to pass on their religion to their future generations

# The Environment and Religion

- Christian, Jewish, Islamic, Buddhism and Hinduism religions all support the environment
- Scriptural References
- The **New Testament**, **Hebrew Bible** and the **Qur'an**, and **Upanishads** support by respecting animals, eating and planting fruit and respecting all forms of nature
- Themes of reward and punishment



# Judaism and the Environment Ethics

- The Jewish belief toward the environment is similar to the themes found in the Tanuk.
  - God is all powerful and we must recognize him and serve him in the ways that he commands.
  - God instruct the Jews about their limitations on natural resources





# Christianity and the Environment

- **Rom 8:19-23**
- This passage shows how the creation was for the children of God and the world was created for us.
- Christians believe we should respect all aspects of the environment and that those who do so will be rewarded.
- Relation to **sustainability**

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- Nature is only a gift from God and must be used with due care – the concept of stewardship.

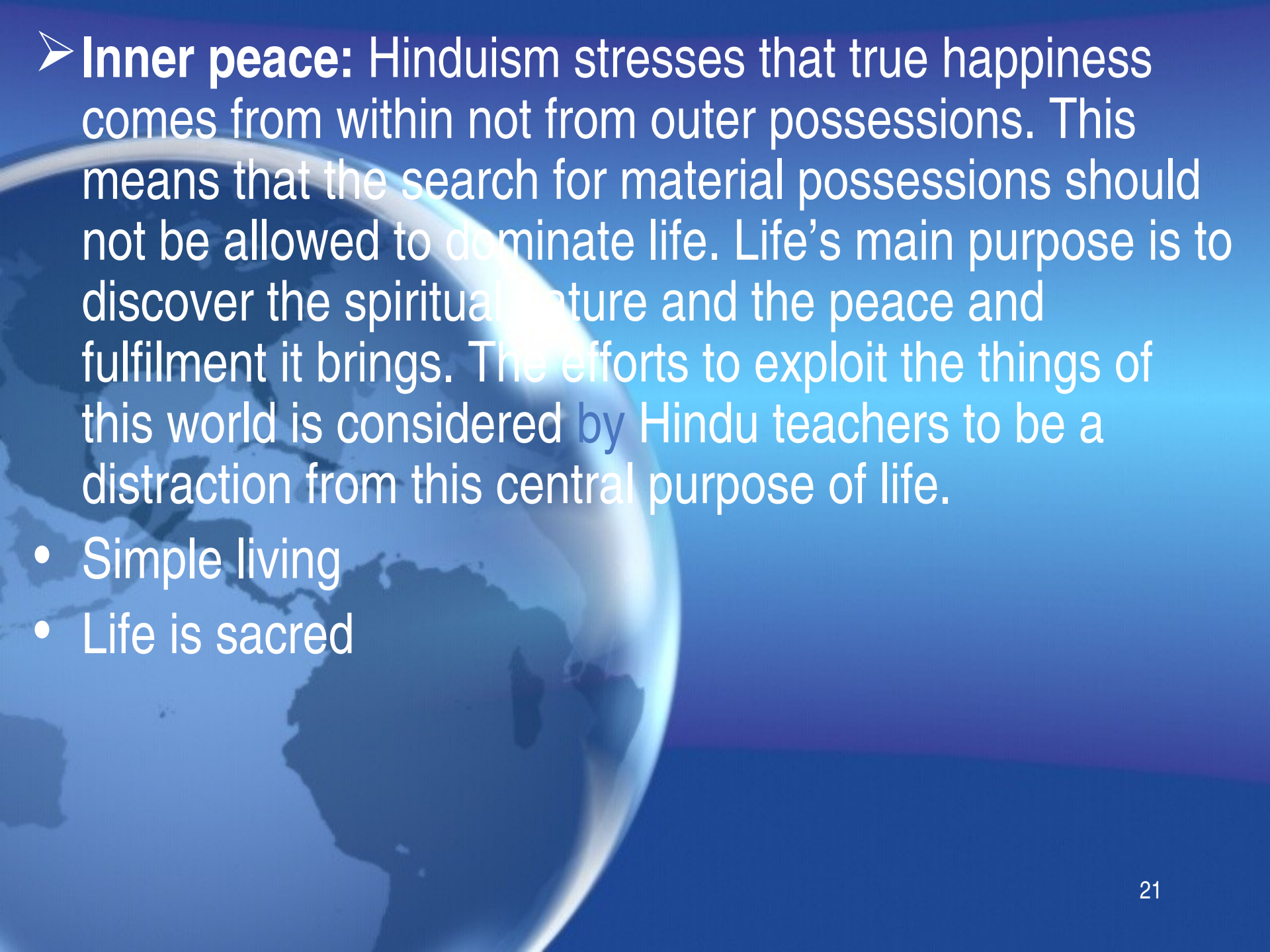
*“the heaven and the heaven of heavens is the Lord’s thy God, the earth also, with all that therein is”*

- If not, Nature will take over man’s superiority over it

# Environmental Ethics based on Hinduism

- Vedic hymns and poems (Vedas)
- The vedas were passed down from ancient times in written form and by words of mouth.
- Hindus believe that the Vedas are the inspired word of God, delivered at the dawn of the universe to Brahma, the first created being.





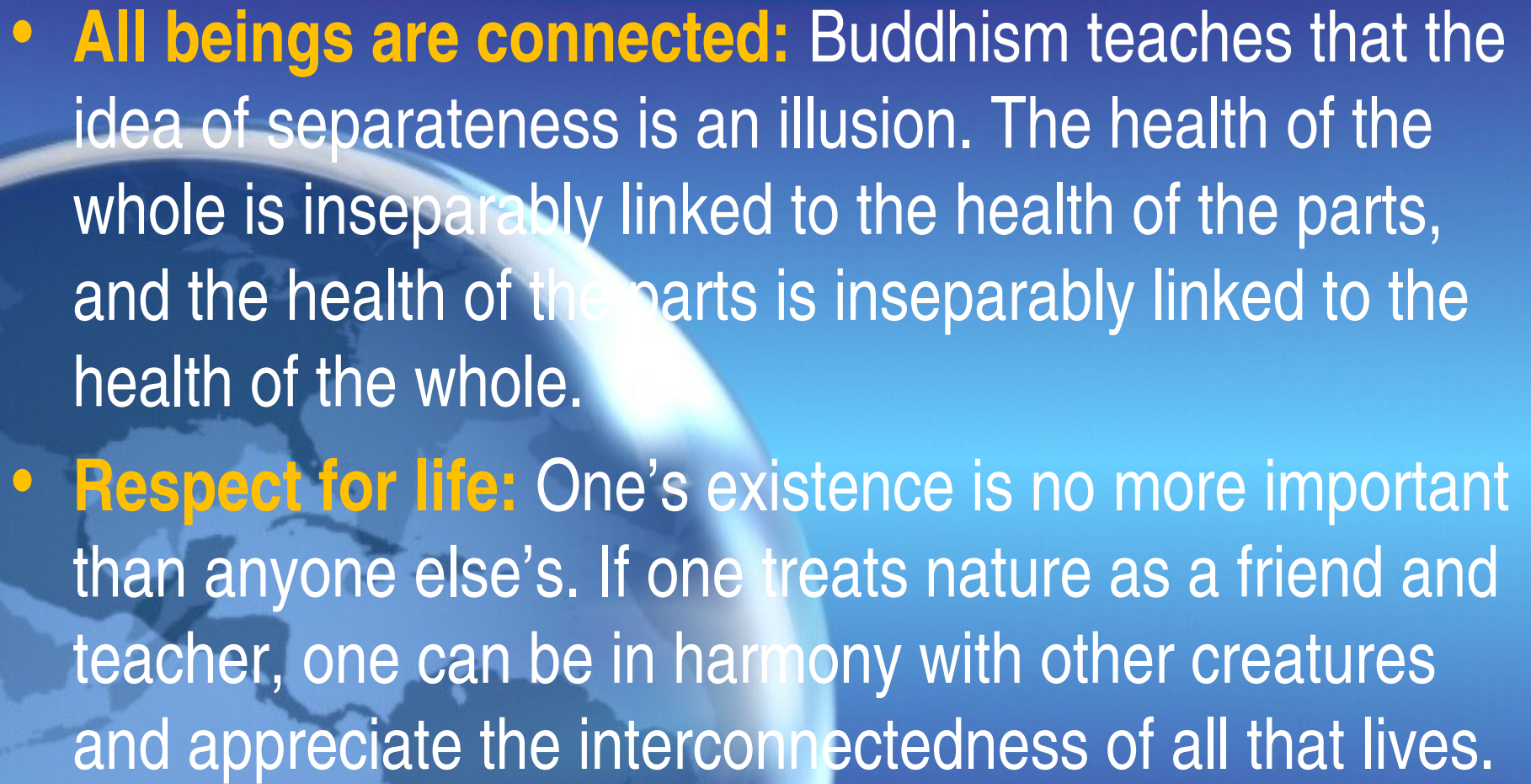
➤ **Inner peace:** Hinduism stresses that true happiness comes from within not from outer possessions. This means that the search for material possessions should not be allowed to dominate life. Life's main purpose is to discover the spiritual nature and the peace and fulfilment it brings. The efforts to exploit the things of this world is considered by Hindu teachers to be a distraction from this central purpose of life.

- Simple living
- Life is sacred

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- Living only for the satisfaction of the senses, such a person lives in vain
  - Hinduism worship Animals as well as plants

# Buddhism & Environmental Ethics



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- **All beings are connected:** Buddhism teaches that the idea of separateness is an illusion. The health of the whole is inseparably linked to the health of the parts, and the health of the parts is inseparably linked to the health of the whole.
  - **Respect for life:** One's existence is no more important than anyone else's. If one treats nature as a friend and teacher, one can be in harmony with other creatures and appreciate the interconnectedness of all that lives.