

# In Search Of Ultimate Reality

Peter Oye Sagay

## Contents

**The Search Of Ultimate Reality Within Religions.**

**The Search of Ultimate Reality Outside Of Religion.**

**Conclusion.**

## The Search Of Ultimate Reality Within Religions

The subject of *origin* is a common curiosity: humanity is existentially oriented to the notion of *beginnings* and *ends*, so it is no wonder that most people like to know about the origin of the things that are of interest to them. Since the universe is of interest to all of us, because we are all part of it, we want to know about its beginning and of the possibility of its end. Philosophers and other thinkers indulge their curiosities about the origin of our universe by searching for what they call *Ultimate Reality*: *the irreducible entity that caused our physical universe*. As is often the case, they never unanimously agree on the identity and attributes of *ultimate reality* even though most seem to agree on its existence. In this brief presentation, I conceptually present the search for *ultimate reality* from its beginnings within religious frameworks to its philosophical abstractions by various philosophers. Then I conclude that in actuality, it is the nature of *ultimate reality* that is in dispute not its existence.

Humanity's search for *ultimate reality* began with ancient religions. In **Africa**, the belief in the existence of two realms is ancient. Indigenous Africans are certain that a world other than our physical world exists. This non-physical world they believe is the realm of *spirits*: *spirits* of their ancestors, *spirits* of the various gods that control the natural phenomena that affect their lives and a *supreme spirit (ultimate reality)* who is above all the other *spirits*. This fundamental African Metaphysics was the forerunner of the polytheism that was pervasive in the ancient Mediterranean civilizations.

In the **Middle East**, ancient Sumerians had very elaborate religious practices. They believed that a group of invisible, immortal, super powerful beings ruled the universe according to well defined laws. They had four primary gods they called *creating gods*: *An*, the god of heaven (ultimate reality); *Ki*, the goddess of earth; *Enlil*, the god of air; and *Enki*, the god of water. To the Sumerians, *heaven, earth, air* and *water* were the fundamental components of the universe.

Ancient Mesopotamians, primarily the Babylonians and Assyrians, adopted the Sumerian pantheon and adapted several aspects of the Sumerian religion to their circumstances. For example, *Marduk*, a city god was elevated to a supreme god (*ultimate reality*). According to the ancient epic poem *Enuma elish*, *Maduk's* elevation occurred when he defeated *Tiamat* and *Kingu*, the dragons of chaos. Maduk became so supreme that he was acknowledged as the creator of the universe and holder of numerous titles including the god of light and life and the ruler of destinies

Eventually, many Mesopotamians began to see the established gods as too remote to be sufficiently relevant in their individual lives. So the desire of a personal god ('*my god*' or '*my goddess*') became necessary. This desire took root in the hearts of many ancient Mesopotamians but germinated and flowered greatly in the heart of the great patriarch of the ancient Hebrews, *Abram* from *Ur* of the *Chaldees*. Abram's personal God *Yahweh* renamed him *Abraham* and through *Abraham* and his descendants *Yahweh* was introduced to the world.

Ancient Egyptians were very aware of the existence of a realm different from and outside their physical world: the *afterlife*. They had many gods, albeit their pantheon was not as structurally unified as those of the Sumerians or Mesopotamians. Ancient Egyptians placed the existence of the ocean before the existence of their supreme god *Ra*, the sun god, who emerged from a flower on the ocean (according to some creation account, *Ra* emerged from an egg from the ocean). *Ra*, had four offsprings: the gods *Shu* and *Geb* and the goddesses *Tefnut* and *Nut*. *Shu* and *Tefnut* became the atmosphere, *Geb* became the earth and *Nut* became the sky. *Ra* (*ultimate reality*), was the supreme cosmic deity and supreme ruler.

Ancient Egypt also witnessed the adaptation of gods to circumstances. For example, pharaoh *Amenhotep III* renamed *Ra*, *Aton* (a sun god). *Aton* is an ancient word meaning *physical solar force*. When *Amenhotep IV* (son and successor of *Amenhotep III*) became pharaoh, he revolutionized Egyptian religion by proclaiming *Aton* the only and true god and renamed himself *Akhenaton*: he who is devoted to *Aton*. *Akhenaton's* monotheistic revolution failed and ancient Egypt returned to polytheism.

Archaeologist, Paolo Matthiae discovered *Elba*, an ancient city of Northern Syria, in 1968. Cuneiform inscriptions on clay tablets unearthed by Matthiae's excavations, revealed that Northern Syria flourished in the third millennium B.C. These clay tablets did not reveal details of Syrian religious practices during this period but they indicated that polytheism was in place and gods were grouped as either heaven gods or as gods of the underworld. Additional information about ancient Syrian religion in the 2nd millennium B.C. was revealed when more clay tablets dating to the later part of the 2nd millennium were discovered at *Ugarit* (currently *Ra's Shamreh*). These clay tablets indicated that ancient Syrians acknowledged a creator god *El* (*ultimate reality*) who had a wife *Asherah*. *Baal*, a weather god, later displaced *El*, a sky god, and became the supreme god of ancient Syrian religion.

By the middle of the first millennium B.C (about 525 B.C.), many of the ancient regions of the Middle East had been incorporated into the Persian Empire. The Persian Empire began in ancient Iran. Aryan tribes lived in the north: the *Medes* were the most prominent of these tribes. They dominated the Persians who emigrated from *Parsua* to settle in the south, until the Persian King *Cyrus the Great* overthrew the Median rulers and established the Persian Empire. The frontiers were later extended by his successors, notably King *Darius the Great*. The incorporation of the ancient regions of the Middle East into the Persian Empire did not eradicate their respective religions. Ancient Hebrews who lived in Persia continued to worship *Yahweh*, the Babylonians continued to worship their gods, and *Parsua* (Persians) and *Medes* continued to worship the gods they brought with them to ancient Iran.

About the middle of the first millennium B.C., *Zoroastrianism*, a new religion founded by *Zoroaster* (about 630 – 550 B.C.), emerged in ancient Persia. *Zoroaster's* doctrines are contained in his *Gatha* (psalms) and they are part of the *Avesta* (the scripture of *Zoroastrianism*). Essentially, *Zoroastrianism* preached monotheism. The deity worshiped was *Ahura Mazda* (*ultimate reality*). According to *Zoroastrianism*, *good* and *evil* permeates the universe; truth (*Asha*) and lie are continual opposition; *Spenta Mainyu* (creative force) of *Ahura Mazda* and his six assistants (*goodmind, truth, power, devotion, health, and life*) are the source of all that is good; and the *Angra Mainyu* (twin of *Spenta Mainyu*) and his assistants, are the source of all that is evil. By choosing truth, *Spenta* became good and by choosing *lie* *Angra* became evil. In like manner, human beings will determine their fate by the choices they make. *Paradise* awaits choosers of truth upon death and hell awaits choosers of lie upon death. Ultimately, evil will be entirely eradicated by fire and molten metal. The Persian Kings, *Darius I* and his son *Xerxes I*, worshipped *Ahura Mazda*, the deity of *Zoroastrianism*. But it was the Persian dynasty of the *Sassanids* (AD 224-641) that established *Zoroastrianism* as a state religion in Persia. Later *Islam* became the state religion.

In **Asia**, the ancient concept of *ultimate reality* was also initially anchored in religion. As early as the *Shang Dynasty* (about 1600-1050 B.C.) in ancient China, *Shang Di*, a supreme god who lived in *Tian* (Chinese for heaven) with other gods, was worshipped. During the Zhou Dynasty (about 1027-246 B.C), *Tian* replaced *Shang Di* because the Zhou kings believed that their rise to the throne of ancient China was a *tian ming* (mandate from heaven). Later, *Tian* became an abstraction with ultimate cosmic power in association with another cosmic abstraction, *Tai Ji*. *Tai Ji* was conceptualized as the cosmic source of all reality and the fundamental union of two contradictory aspects of the universe: the *active yang* and the *passive ying*, as it generates and regulates their cyclic changes in the five elements that make up the world: *wood, earth, fire, metal* and *water*. By the 4th century, the legend of *Pan Gu* (ultimate reality), the creator god, had become an important aspect of ancient Chinese religion. *Pan Gu* was at the top of the Chinese pantheon hierarchy, *Tien Tsu* (great beings of heaven). *Yuan Shi*, son of *Pan Gu* was head of the triad gods who were revered as the *Three Pure Ones*. The triad gods were *Yuan Shi*, *Yu Di* (Jade Emperor), and *Zao Shen* (the kitchen god), who monitored the states of family affairs and reported findings to the triad gods. There were also other gods: *Long Wang* or *Dragon King* (god of waters), and his four brothers: *Ao Kuang*, *Ao Jun*, *Ao Shun*, *Ao Chi'in* who assisted Yu Di ; Hou Tu, the earth god; Guan Di, the god of war; *Shou Xing*, *Fu Xing*, *Lu Xing*, the three star gods; and the celebrated Eight Immortals: *Zhongli Quan*, who was able to revive the dead with his feather fan and knew the secret of longevity; *Zhangguo Lao*, who had the power of invisibility; *Lu Dongbin*, who with his sword got rid of the world of evil monsters; *Cao Guojiu*, who was the patron deity of actors; *Li Tieguai*, who with smoke from his smoking gourd freed the spirit from the body; *Han Xiangzi*, who was patron of musicians and could cause flowers to bloom; *Lan Caihe*, who had both male and female nature; and *He Xiangnu*, the girl and holder of the lotus blossom.

Ancient Chinese religion also adapted their concept of *ultimate reality*. As the social environment evolved, several Chinese sages created movements that sought *ultimate reality* outside of ancient polytheism. Most notable among these were *Kongfuzi* or *Confucius* (about 551-479 B.C.), who founded *Confucianism*: a philosophy that advocates the attainment of an ideal social system through proper human acts such as *kindness, uprightness, decorum, wisdom, and faithfulness*; and Lao-tsu or Laozi (about 570 – about 490 B.C.), who founded *Daoism* or *Taoism*: a philosophy that advocates human conformity with the underlying pattern of the universe, the indescribable *Dao* or *Tao* (the way).

In ancient India, *ultimate reality* was sought through the polytheistic system based on the *Vedas* (*Rig-Veda, Sama-Veda, Yajur-Veda, and Atharva-Veda*). The *Vedas*, oldest literature of Indian thought, acknowledge the existence of the *spirit* realm in which gods live. The *Rig-Veda*, oldest of the four collections that make up the *Vedas*, is a collection of many hymns that are sacred to *Hinduism*: an ancient pantheistic religion. *Hinduism* has *Shiva* and *Vishnu* (the supreme and all pervasive god) as the two primary gods, *Devi* as a primary goddess, and several other gods and demi gods. In ancient India, a primary function of the *hotri* (the reciter), was to invoke the gods by loud recitations of the hymns, while the *Adhvaryu* (priest) recites sacrificial formulas from the *Yajur-Veda* (collections of sacrificial formulae). Some of the hymns and poems of the Vedas, presented philosophic thoughts that later evolved into the *Henotheism* (the doctrine of one god with many forms and the belief that the worship of any of the forms is essentially the worship of the one god) of *Hinduism*. The *Vedas*, the *Upanishads* and the *Brahmanas* constitute the *Shruti* which is the religious text of *Hinduism*.

In **Western Europe**, the ancient search for *ultimate* reality through polytheism continued in the elaborate pantheistic religion of the ancient Greeks. *Zeus* (ultimate reality) was the supreme god; his wife *Hera* was the queen of heaven and guardian of marriage; *Hephaestus*, god of fire and metal workers; *Athena*, god of wisdom and war; *Apollo*, god of light, poetry and music; *Artemis*, god of wildlife and the moon; *Ares*, god of war; *Aphrodite*, goddess of love, *Hestia*, goddess of the hearth; *Hermes*, messenger of the gods and god of science and invention; *Demeter*, god of Agriculture; *Poseidon*, god of the sea. These twelve gods were considered the primary gods and were called the *Olympians* because they lived in *Mount Olympus*. Other gods were *Dionysus*, god of wine and pleasure, and *Hades*, god of the underworld, who lived in the *underworld* (home of the souls and the dead) with his wife *Persephone*. There were lesser gods like the sea gods, *Nereids* and *Tritons* who reported to *Poseidon* and his wife *Amphitrite*. At home and away from home, the Greek gods were very important to ancient Greeks and they pervaded all aspects of the lives of the people. The relationship between people and their gods was personal and friendly albeit the gods meted out punishment when they deemed it necessary. Holy sites in honor of the gods were set aside and were universally acknowledged by the people. Priests were in attendance in the holy sites for consultations although there was no organized church. For example, *Delphi*, was a holy site dedicated to *Apollo*. The temple, at *Delphi*, contained an *Oracle*, or prophet who prophesied to visitors to the temple.

Ancient Romans also worshipped many gods. The Roman pantheon was a combination of indigenous gods and the gods of other cultures that came under the influence of ancient Rome. Indigenous gods were impersonal spirits (*numina*) who lived in all things. Indigenous Romans believed that *Numina* were neither good nor bad and that the actions of *numina* towards the people were dependent on how *numina* were treated: treat *numina* well and the powers of *numina* shall treat you well. This fundamental belief was the basis of indigenous religious rituals, initially supervised by the *pater familias* (head of household), later by the *rex* (head of community) and other priestlike groups conversant with the complex rituals associated with specific *numen* (singular for *numina*). The most important *numina* were the spirits that dwell with families and those that were gods of the farms: *Vedas*, goddess of the hearth; *Lares*, guardians of the home and family farm; and *Penates*, gods of the pantry. Also, there were the spirits of *Jupiter*, a former sky god, later a god who dwelled in a special oak tree on the *Capitoline Hill*; *Mars*, god of the season of growth, harvest and warfare; and *Genius*, the spirit of man.

Indigenous religious rituals of ancient Romans began to change when they came into contact with their neighbours: the *Etruscans*. The ordered and elaborate religious structure of the *Etruscans* (statue gods, temples, religious processions and community based religious activities) gradually replaced the *numina* structure of indigenous Romans. In 396 B.C., Roman conquerors of *Veil* (an important Etruscan city) took the statue of the goddess *Juno* to Rome and established it on the *Aventine Hill*. The *Etruscan* goddess *Minerva* was similarly assimilated. Ancient Rome's conquests of other regions, most notably, ancient Greece, brought more gods into Rome. The Greek gods were virtually assimilated: *Zeus*, *Aphrodite*, *Hera*, *Ares*, *Hermes*, *Artemis*, *Athena*, *Gaea*, *Demeter*, *Hades*, *Uranus*, *Hypnos*, *Hephaestus* became respectively synonymous with the Roman gods: *Jupiter* (ultimate reality, father of all gods), *Venus* (god of desire), *Juno* (goddess of marriage and childbirth), *Mars* (god of war), *Mercury* (messenger of the gods), *Diana* (goddess of the hunt), *Minerva*, *Terra* (mother earth), *Ceres* (goddess of grain), *Pluto* (god of the underworld), *Uranus* (god of the sky), *Somnus* (god of sleep), *Vulcan* (god of fire). Irrespective of its origin, a god once established in ancient Rome was respected, albeit the people had favorites. Polytheism remained firmly a state-approved religion in ancient Rome until Emperor *Constantine* and his co-Emperor *Licinius*, issued the *Edict of Milan* (A.D. 313), which mandated tolerance of *Christianity* in the Roman Empire.

## The Search Of Ultimate Reality Outside of Religion

The ancient disposition of searching for *ultimate reality* within religious frameworks still exists today albeit the frameworks are usually monotheistic rather than polytheistic.

The search of *ultimate reality* outside of religion also has its origin in ancient times. Ancient **Africa** and the later civilizations of the **Middle East** certainly knew about the fundamentality of substances such as *earth, water, air* and the *sky*. These substances were important aspects of their customs and religious rituals. To these earliest civilizations, the *fundamentality* of these substances was a *given* so they did not deem it necessary to establish it. This was not the case in Greece in the first millennium B.C.

**Thales** (about 625-about 546 B.C.) of *Miletus* (ancient city located on the Ionian coast of Asia Minor), practised about 580 B.C. He was the first historically documented philosopher of Western Thought and is considered the founder of Greek Philosophy and one of the seven wise men of Greece. *Bias of Priene, Chilon of Sparta, Cleobulus of Lindus, Periander of Corinth, Pittacus of Mytilene, and Solon of Athens* are the others. As a result of Thales' scientific inquiries in astronomical, physical and meteorological phenomena, he became convinced that *water* is the fundamental substance of the universe because he thought evaporation and condensation were universal processes.

*Thales* protegee, **Anaximander** (also from the Ionian School of thought) later proposed that *Apeiron* (the *boundless*) is the fundamental substance of the universe, not *water*. He believed that *Apeiron* is an *intangible, invisible, infinite, indestructible* and *eternal* substance. *Anaximander* also had insight into continuous motion and its ability to bring about effects. He proposed that *Apeiron* is in a ceaseless motion which produces the familiar substances: *warmth, cold, earth, air* and *fire*. According to him, all other recognizable objects are derived from these substances. **Anaximenes** continued the Ionian philosophy of “*One*” fundamental substance. However, he believed that *air* was the fundamental substance of the universe.

At about 530 B.C. The Ionian School's quest for the fundamental substance of the universe was overshadowed by the *Pythagorean School of Thought*, founded by **Pythagoras**, the great mathematician. The *Pythagoreans'* (Pythagoras and his students) quest was to determine a holistic view of existence, so they fused their supernatural and ethical beliefs with their mathematical thoughts into a spiritual whole. They believed that the human soul is entrapped in the body, released after death and reincarnated to begin a higher or lower life according to the degree of the virtuosity of the previous life. They also believed that purification of the soul through intellectual virtues and abstinence from sensual pleasures was the highest human ideal, and they lived accordingly. Although the Pythagoreans proposed no specific fundamental substance, they however believed that all things are made from *numbers* and *geometric figures*. Consequently, they made great discoveries in mathematics, music and astronomy.

The Ionians' quest for the fundamental substance of the universe re-emerged with **Heraclitus** of Ephesus at about 500 B. C. He believed that the fundamental substance of the universe is *fire*, that all things are in continual flux, and that stability is an illusion. His focus on fire probably led him to notice that heat produces changes in matter. This observation foreshadowed the modern theory of *energy*.

These varied thoughts on the fundamental substance of the universe eventually led to the postulates of multiple fundamental substances (most of which were already proposed by the *Sumerians*), that heralded the *Pluralists School of Thought*.

In the 5th century B.C., the Pluralists led by **Empedocle** and **Anaxagoras** rejected the Ionian concept of *one fundamental substance* and postulated that there are four: *air, water, earth* and *fire*. *Empedocle* proposed that these four fundamental substances of the universe are alternately combined by the opposite forces of *love* and *strife*, and that the underlying process evolves from *chaos* to *form* and back to *chaos* in an eternal cycle. *Anaxagoras* also postulated that all things are composed of very small particles (he called these particles *seeds*) that exist in infinite variety. He posited that the derivation of material objects from *seeds* is caused by a *world mind* who separates and combines the seeds. His concept of small particles anticipated the development of an atomic theory of matter that was later formulated by the *atomists*: **Leucippus** and **Democritus**, who is generally considered the first thinker to systematically formulate an atomic theory of matter.



The ancient search for ultimate reality outside of religion, evolved into three primary modern schools of thought: **Monism**, **Dualism**, and **Pluralism**. *Monists* like the Ionians before them, propose only one fundamental *substance*, *Dualists* propose two fundamental *substances*, and *Pluralists* propose more than two fundamental substances.

Mathematician, **Rene Descartes** (1596-1650) was the chief proponent of *Dualism* in the 17th century. Descartes proposed that existence has a dual nature: *physical nature* and *mental nature*. This proposition evolved into what is now known as the *mind-body* problem. *Cartesian Dualism* is conceptually substantive. However, Descartes was unsuccessful in explaining convincingly, the relationship between *body* and *mind*.

Mathematician, **Christian Von Wolff** (1679-1754) coined the word *Monism*. Although *Monism* was a new word at coinage, its basic proposition of one fundamental substance is not new. *Monists* are generally grouped into three primary categories:

- (1) **Materialistic Monists** propose that all things in the universe ultimately reduce to one category of matter.
- (2) **Idealistic Monists** propose that matter is a manifestation of the mind.
- (3) **Mind-Stuff Theorists** (proponents of mind-stuff theory) propose that matter and mind are just aspects of each other.

Philosopher, **Baruch Spinoza** (1632-1677) was a strong proponent of *monism* in the 17th century albeit he did not call himself a *monist*. Spinoza named *ultimate reality Substance*. He equated God with *Substance*. He believed that *Substance* was uncaused, transcendal and immanent, and that other entities in the universe are finite and transitory modes (manifestations of God). Spinoza acknowledged the possibility of God's infinite attributes but stated that only two of the attributes are accessible to humans:

- (1) **Extension** (material reality)
- (2) **Conscious thought**

Spinoza implied an imaginary boundary between *material reality* and *conscious thought*, by postulating that causation is only internally manifested, that is, between the objects of *extension* or between the ideas of *conscious thought*, and not between objects and ideas. In order to explain the apparent causal interaction between objects and ideas, he proposed the theory of **Psychophysical Parallelism** which states that *every idea has a physical counterpart, similarly every physical object has an ideational counterpart*. The implication of *Psychophysical Parallelism* when applied to the *mind-body problem* is that the mind and body are different forms of the same substance. If causal interaction is impossible between these forms, how then are the different states activated? Spinoza provided no plausible explanation.

Spinoza also acknowledged the existence of a non-physical, indestructible world populated by the **Essences** of the physical world. *Essences* according to Spinoza are non temporal conceptual entities which have their *being* in timelessness and are therefore eternal. They transcend the physical world, but are in it. They are self-caused and are the causal agents of the physical world. Spinoza indicated that *Essences* connect temporal entities with *Substance*, and that true freedom is only possible in the realm of *Essences* and not in the temporal world.

Before Spinoza, **Plato** (about 428-347B. C.) also thought that *ultimate reality* is made up of timeless or eternal entities that are independent of sense perceptions but have *appearances* in the physical world. Plato called these eternal entities *Forms* or *Ideas* and their appearances *approximations* of ideal *Forms* or *Ideas*.

**Aristotle** (384-322B.C), who was a former student of Plato, disagreed with Plato's proposition of the existence of a realm of *forms* or *ideas* independent of the physical world, and with Plato's notion of *approximations* of *forms*. Aristotle proposed instead, that the form or essence of any object of the physical world is a part of the object and does not reside ideally in an independent realm. Aristotle noted that it is possible to create abstraction from objects but that this possibility does not mean that the results of such abstractions (which he called *mathematical objects*) exists in an independent realm of *forms*.

In the 18th century, philosopher **Henri Bergson** (1859-1941) proposed an ontology based on the spiritual dimension of life in which intuition was paramount and *Elan vital* (pure energy) an incorporeal force that can not be scientifically verified, provided the vital impulse that continuously shaped all entities. Bergson's ontology acknowledged the spiritual component of existence and implied an invisible force (pure energy) in a non-physical realm to which our physical realm is depended. Bergson made noteworthy contributions in several areas of thought, particularly in the philosophy of *Time*.

**Titus Lucretius Carus** (about 94-about 55B.C.) was a Roman Poet. In the first century B.C., he attributed human unhappiness to the fear of death and gods. In his *De Renum Natura* (on the nature of things), he advocated the philosophic materialism of Democritus and Epicurus and their atomistic concept of the universe. These philosophic materialists did not deny the existence of gods, but they believed that the gods are not concerned about human affairs. To them *pleasure* was the ultimate good and highest goal of life. Their *ultimate reality* was pleasure, intellectual and sensual pleasure, a system of philosophy now known as *Epicureanism*.

In the 17th and 18th centuries, **Deists** (proponents of *Deism, a rationalistic religious philosophy*), were uncomfortable with the church's concept of ultimate reality. The church's *specific teachings* and *revelations* were suspect. The *Deists* preferred their *ultimate reality*, found through reason and from the type of religious knowledge inherent in each person.

**Ludwig Feuerbach** (1804-1872) in *The Essence of Christianity* (1841; trans 1854) replaced orthodox religion with religious psychology. According to Feuerbach, the justification for the existence of religion is only as a result of its psychological benefit. He maintains that essentially an individual is preoccupied with *self*, and that the worship of God is essentially the worship of an *idealized self*.

**Arthur Schopenhauer** (1788-1860) in *The World as Will and Idea* (1819; trans. 1883), equated *ultimate reality* with *will*: an inner nature with idea as its body. According to Schopenhauer, conscious and unconscious activities of *self* are *will* (life force) which directs the individual through life in pursuit of successive goals, none of which can permanently satiate the infinite activity of *will*. Consequently, the circle of birth, death and rebirth goes on endlessly until reason is able to establish resignation, so that striving can cease.

Philosopher **Friedrich Nietzsche** (1844-1900) indicated "God is dead" in his book *Thus spoke Zarathustra* (1883-1885), and should be replaced by *Urbemensch* (*Superman* or *Overman*). The theme of *Thus Spoke Zarathustra* was the obsolescence and irrelevance of traditional morality and its enslavement of the people. Nietzsche termed this morality *slave morality*, which *Urbemensch* had come to eradicate. To Nietzsche and his fictitious prophet Zarathustra, *Urbemensch* is *ultimate reality*.

Mathematician, philosopher and a founder of sociology, **Auguste Comte** (1798-1857) coined the term **positivism**. Comte wanted to positively reorganize society through scientific knowledge. He later presented this aspiration as a religious concept in which humanity is *ultimate reality* and the object of worship. Some positivists rejected Comte's religious concept because it was contrary to the non-religious platform of positivism. However, they accepted the traditional idea of positivism which is that experience is the only source of knowledge.

During the 20th century, Logical Positivists led by mathematician **Bertrand Russell** (1872-1970) and philosopher **Ludwig Wittgenstein** (1889-1951) declared metaphysics as meaningless, because they believed that only scientific facts from scientific investigations are meaningful. Another group of positivists, the *Logical Empiricists*, rejected logical positivism because they believed that the principle of scientific investigation is itself philosophically elusive. Bertrand Russell contributed greatly to mathematics, particularly in symbolic logic. He is renowned for his paradox, the *Russell Paradox*, and *Principia Mathematica*, a great work in mathematics which he co-wrote with his former teacher and great mathematician **Alfred Whitehead** (1861-1947). Ludwig Wittgenstein contributed greatly to conceptual and linguistic philosophy.

## Conclusion

This brief conceptual presentation of the *search for ultimate reality within and outside religion* is the tip of the iceberg. Volumes have been inexhaustibly written, by numerous authors, about the subject. Nonetheless, it is explicitly or implicitly evident, no matter what volume one reads, that it is illogical to dispute the existence of *ultimate reality*. For whenever a type of *ultimate reality* is rejected, it is replaced with another *ultimate reality* sometimes unknowingly.

Consider the Greek **Sophists** of the 5th century B.C. Who were primarily skeptics. To them, *reality* itself was *suspect* as indicated by their famous maxim: “*nothing is; or if anything is, it cannot be known.*” The Sophists may not have acknowledged the gods, but they definitely had their *ultimate reality* as indicated by another of their famous maxim: “*man is the measure of all things.*”

Even **Atheist** who are confirmed nonbelievers in the existence of gods or God, and **Agnostics** who await concrete proof of the existence of God before they can believe, have their *ultimate reality*. For the belief in nothing beyond *self*, is a belief in the *ultimateness* of *self*.

Essentially, *ultimate reality* for religious people, past and present, is their respective God or gods. For non-religious people, past and present, *ultimate reality* exists as a variable intellectual abstraction.

The issue of the existence of *ultimate reality* is different from the issue of why there is substantive variability in humanity's account of the exactness of *ultimate reality*. **Christians** will tell you that their God is not **Allah**. Jews will tell you that **Yahweh** is only the God of the Jews. Moslems will tell you that **Jesus** was only a great prophet and is neither God nor the only begotten son of God. Bahais even though they preach one God and one religion will tell you that **Jesus** is not God but a great prophet who was a manifestation of God for his time just like **Baha'u'llah** the founder of the Bahai faith was a manifestation of God for his time. And the variability goes on and on.

This variability notwithstanding, there is a fundamental attribute of *Ultimate Reality* that is present in all entities. It is *Energy*. Henri Bergson called it **Elan Vital** (Pure Energy) an incorporeal Force that cannot be scientifically verified. This **Energy** is **Ultimate Reality**. It Supremely initialized the **Big Bang** and imbued all entities with *energy*.