





CHAPTER 1

The Cosmic Lexicon

(A Glossary of the Hereafter)

When it comes to the afterlife, there is one, and only one, place to start: religion. Albert Einstein once said that the essence of religion was humanity's attempt to understand mystery. Because the afterlife is a mysterious topic—and because the *Pocket Guide* always chooses to trust Einstein for reasons of him being a genius—it makes sense for our religious traditions to try to figure out what happens after we die. This is helpful, but there are a lot of religions. A *lot*. And while it's nice that they've spent the last few millennia trying to solve the same big afterlifey questions, none of their answers agree upon much.

Which means navigating their theories can be tricky. Christians are big on **salvation** but look confused when you ask them about **moksha**. Muslims can talk for hours about the **Five Pillars** but could care less about the **Eightfold Path**. Westerners are familiar

with terms such as **reincarnation** and **karma**, but don't know if they're Buddhist concepts or Hindu beliefs or just something they heard about from that hot chick at the gym.

That's what happens with a broad, weird, complicated subject like the afterlife. It creates a vocabulary all its own. It's rich with pious phrases (**born again**), egghead terminology (**metempsychosis**), words you can't pronounce (**chthonic**), and activities in which you probably shouldn't participate (**necromancy**).

Don't worry, though. The *Pocket Guide* is here to serve. Before we dig too deep into the afterlife—clever cemetery-themed play on words, no?—let's start with a glossary. These are the words and concepts you need to know before emancipating your soul, atoning for your sins, or otherwise continuing in this book. Tune up your harps, kids. It's time for fun with **thanatology**!



ANGEL

A heavenly being. In Jewish and Christian traditions, angels are often tasked with interacting with mankind on God's behalf. In the Bible, angels do cool things like rescuing Lot from the about-to-be-annihilated Sodom, telling Mary she's pregnant with Jesus, and performing a covert prison extraction on behalf of a locked-up Peter.¹

The angels of Islam are even more impressive, carrying out the killer tasks no one else really wants to do. According to the Qu'ran, specific angels are responsible for keeping track of the daily good and bad deeds of every human, making sure it rains, and guarding the gates of hell. Islamic angels aren't just bookkeepers or sentries, though. A whole squadron of them—nineteen not-to-be-messed-

1. Genesis 19:1, Exodus 33:2, Luke 1:26, Acts 5:19 (respectively). Unless otherwise noted, all scriptural citations are from the New International Version of the Bible.

with “wardens of the fire”—are responsible for actively punishing souls in hell.² It should be noted that these angels rarely show up as porcelain collectibles.

Please use it in a sentence or two: Seeing how angels are always telling Bible characters not to be afraid of them, one must assume angels aren’t adorable little apple-cheeked, curly-haired babies. No, they’re *scary* little apple-cheeked babies.

Not to be confused with: Anything sporting a halo and appearing on cutesy home decorations, calendars, key chains, and/or teacups.



ANNIHILATIONISM

The belief, held by a minority of Christians, that immortality is granted only to inhabitants of heaven. The unredeemed who go to hell aren’t tortured forever and ever. They’re just destroyed. *Poof*. That’s their everlasting punishment: nonexistence.

Some annihilationists believe that sinners will literally be consumed by hellfire until they disappear into the bubbling magma. So there’s a little bit of torment involved, but it ends quickly. Other annihilationists don’t believe in hell at all.

Please use it in a sentence or two: Christians who believe in annihilationism have a hard time with the idea of a loving God who infinitely torments sinners for committing a finite number of sins. The rest of the Christians think annihilationists are probably bound for hell.

Not to be confused with: *Ucchedavada*, the generally frowned-upon belief in post-death annihilation held by a few rebel Buddhists.

2. Qur’an 74:31.



APOCALYPSE

The devastating, end-of-the-world event—resulting from supernatural intervention, natural disaster, or something humanity did (oops!)—that results in the complete destruction of life on earth. Or the entire universe, depending on the scope of the event.

Within the Christian faith, you'll occasionally hear the word used in conjunction with the Second Coming of Christ or as a synonym for the New Testament book of Revelation. Which makes sense, because *apocalypse* comes from the Greek word *apokalypsis*, which means “the lifting of a veil”—a revelation.

Please use it in a sentence: I believe the apocalypse will result either from an out-of-control asteroid, a nuclear holocaust, or the ironic combination of the two should the Air Force use an intercontinental ballistic missile to shoot down a wayward asteroid but miss their target, much to the dismay of Western Europe.

Not to be confused with: *Apocalypto*, the 2006 Mel Gibson movie about the demise of the Mayan civilization. This film caused dismay in Western Europe, but for other reasons.



ATMAN

The vital force or true self, as identified by **Hinduism** and **Jainism**. And FYI, it's pronounced “ott-MAHN.” As opposed to any pronunciation that rhymes with *Batman*.

See also: *Soul*.



BARDO THODOL

See *Book of the Dead*, Tibetan.



BOOK OF THE DEAD, EGYPTIAN

An illustrated papyrus scroll frequently found in Egyptian tombs or coffins, used to guide a deceased Egyptian through the afterlife and into the blissful Aaru, the Field of Reeds. The main purpose of these scrolls—which were traditionally placed within reach of the deceased—was to keep the newly dead person from getting lost in the perilous underworld. All manner of navigational clues, passwords, songs, magical incantations (like the **Negative Confession**), and other handy tips were contained within the scroll.

Because there's a great deal of variance from one book of the dead to another, it is assumed that wealthy Egyptians arranged for customized books to be created prior to their deaths. Middle-class folks got stuck with a boilerplate book, with their pictographic names hastily scribbled into *insert-name-here* blanks.

The Egyptians didn't call it "the *Egyptian Book of the Dead*," by the way; their title was *Going Forth by Day*.

Please use it in a sentence: Darlene caused quite a scene at the funeral home when she got caught stuffing a large papyrus scroll into Grandfather's coffin, claiming he needed it to remember all the parts of the Negative Confession, especially since he always got stuck on "I haven't carried away the khenfu cakes from the Spirits of the dead."³

Not to be confused with: The *Tibetan Book of the Dead*, which has fewer pictures but lots more monsters.

3. From the *Papyrus of Ani*, history's most famous Egyptian *Book of the Dead*. *The Book of the Dead: Papyrus of Ani*, E.A. Wallis Budge, trans. (Sioux Falls, SD: NuVision Publications, 2009), p. 90.



BOOK OF THE DEAD, TIBETAN

A Buddhist text describing in outrageous detail what happens during the period (called *bardo*) between death and reincarnation. Supposedly written in the eighth century and known as the *Bardo Thodol*, it wasn't translated into English until the twentieth century, but *boy* is the *Pocket Guide* glad the thing eventually made its way West.

Its best-known chapter—"The Great Liberation by Hearing"—is intended to direct a recently dead person as he or she encounters one horrifying deity after another on the way to rebirth. These include the demonic "Gauri of the eastern direction," who stands "wrathful, white, and aloof" on no less than a throne of human carcasses, all while swinging around a single corpse like a gory, gangly baseball bat.⁴ Also worth mentioning: "Padma Heruka, who has three faces / Dark red, white, and blue; and six arms,"⁵ and "black bear-headed Indrani," who holds a "noose of entrails,"⁶ which seems too slippery to be effective as a weapon, but who is the *Pocket Guide* to argue with a bear-headed demon?

Anyway, occasionally a *lama* will recite the *Bardo Thodol* to a dead person to make sure they know what to do should they encounter any six-armed, corpse-swinging demons on the way to the next life.

Please use it in a sentence: Don't read the *Tibetan Book of the Dead* late at night, as it will scare the deer-headed Siddhikari right out of you.⁷

4. Padmasambhava. *The Tibetan Book of the Dead*, Graham Coleman, Gyurme Dorje, Thupten Jinpa, eds. (New York: Viking Penguin, 2006), p. 105.

5. *Ibid.*, 104.

6. *Ibid.*, 110.

7. *Ibid.*, 111.

Not to be confused with: The *Egyptian Book of the Dead*, which has a lot more singing and fewer skullcaps filled with blood.



BORN AGAIN

A synonym used by some adherents of Protestant Christianity to refer to the process of **salvation**, based on Jesus' statement to Nicodemus in John 3:3—"I tell you the truth, no one can see the kingdom of God unless he is born again." Conservative Christians tend to view a "born again" experience as a prerequisite for entrance into heaven.

Please use it in a sentence or two: Jose said he was born again as a child when he responded to an altar call at a Billy Graham crusade. Then he was born again at a Christian youth camp in eighth grade. And he was born again once more at a True Love Waits rally when he was seventeen. Jose was always an overachiever.

Not to be confused with: Jose's experience.





BUDDHISM

A religion that developed out of Hinduism and is based on the teachings of Guatama Buddha. The Buddha experienced enlightenment somewhere around the fourth or fifth century B.C.E., once he determined that—contrary to Hindu beliefs—there was no such thing as the **atman**, or soul. He also realized that life involves a lot of suffering, which he defined as being too attached to the transience of the world.⁸ But suffering can be alleviated by following the **Four Noble Truths** and adhering to the **Eightfold Path** and eventually attaining a state of self-purification and understanding called **moksha**, or liberation from the cycle of rebirth or **reincarnation**.

Buddhism began in India but has since lost ground there and spread into Cambodia, China, Japan, Korea, Laos, Myanmar/Burma, Sri Lanka, Thailand, Tibet, and the Hollywood Hills. An estimated 350–400 million adherents make it the fourth largest religion in the world, behind Christianity, Islam, and Hinduism.

Buddhists you've probably heard of: Orlando Bloom, Richard Gere, Keanu Reeves, Steven Seagal, Uma Thurman, Adam Yauch of the Beastie Boys, and the Dalai Lama.



CHRISTIANITY

With some 2 billion adherents, it's the world's largest religion and the one you probably default to when you think about the afterlife. Christianity grew out of Judaism in the first century A.D. (a calendar distinction related to Christ's birth, by the way) and has its

8. A decent theory, but don't use this line to comfort someone at a funeral. "Quit crying! You're just too attached to the transience of this world, anyway."

origins in the life, death, resurrection, and teachings of Jesus. Christians believe Jesus to be the Son of God, through whom people are reconciled to God, and through whom their sins may be forgiven.

After his death and resurrection, Jesus ascended into the sky—so, obviously, heaven is up *there* somewhere—but will eventually return in the Second Coming, an event tied to notions of the **apocalypse**. Despite a few major doctrinal conflicts among the three main branches of Christianity (Catholic, Protestant, and Orthodox), most believe forgiven followers of Christ will be rewarded with life in heaven after they die, where they will enjoy a blissful eternity in the presence of God. Nonbelievers who die in their sin are cast out of the presence of God and into hell, where they can expect to become familiar with the “gnashing of teeth.”⁹

Christians you’ve probably heard of: Pope Benedict XVI, Bono, Billy Graham, Barack Obama, Joel Osteen, Rick Warren.



CHTHONIC

In Greek mythology, the term used to describe the gods of the underworld—like Hades and Persephone¹⁰—as opposed to the regular Olympian gods like Zeus and Aphrodite. The “underworld” encompassed the final resting place of both the virtuous dead (who end up in the Elysian Fields) and the less-than-virtuous dead (destination: Tartarus).

And it’s pronounced “THON-ic,” as most dictionaries make the “ch” silent. Except for the pretentious *Oxford English Dictionary*,

9. An excellent phrase in the King James Version of the Bible, appearing six times in the Gospel of Matthew and once in the Gospel of Luke, always related to the final destination of the wicked.

10. Respectively, the god of the dead and queen of the underworld.

which feels this is just the Americans being lazy about pronunciation and insists you say “kuh-THON-ic.”

Please use it in a sentence: *You* use it in a sentence. The *Pocket Guide* is still working on the pronunciation.

Not to be confused with: *Chthonic*, the melodic black metal band from Taiwan, who paint their faces into ghoulish Gene Simmons–like death masks but who are not, in fact, the kings and queens of hell. Unless you consider OzzFest to be a surrogate for hell.



CREMATION

The practice of incinerating the soft parts of a dead body as an alternative to the traditional casket-and-burial route. Cremation is central to **Hinduism**, whose adherents believe it's the first step in the process of **reincarnation**. It's less popular among Christians, who tend to worry what kinds of bodies they'll have at the resurrection if their only remains have been flung willy-nilly into a garden somewhere, or, worse, sprinkled into a mountain stream. Islam, Zoroastrianism, and Orthodox Judaism forbid cremation outright.¹¹

Please use it in a sentence: Doug chose cremation for the same reasons most people do—because it's dignified, it's economical, it's environmentally sound, and because he'd always been something of a pyro.



DAMNATION

What happens to unsaved sinners after they die, according to the teachings of Christianity. Damnation is bad on all fronts because it

11. Jewish law states that the soul of a cremated person is unable to reach a final place of rest . . . which made the Nazi-operated crematoriums during the Holocaust even more of an atrocity.

involves not just the condemnation to hell but also the denial of entrance to heaven.

Please use it in a sentence or two: Carlos used to laugh whenever that street preacher yelled at him about eternal damnation. But now that he was stuck in hell, chained naked to a flaming cactus while being perpetually pepper-sprayed in both eyes by a winged demon, he figured he might have been too quick to judge.

Not to be confused with: *Tarnation*, the cartoonish, colloquial synonym for damnation made popular by Yosemite Sam.



DEMON

An evil spirit in the Christian, Jewish, Islamic, and Hindu religious traditions, as well as in comic books (*Etrigan*), cult television programs (*Buffy the Vampire Slayer*), and movies starring Ron Perlman (*Hellboy*). Popular theology makes demons into the whip-cracking taskmasters of hell, but this isn't exactly supported by the Bible (where demons possess people but do little else) or the teachings of Islam (where "creatures of fire" called jinns may be good or evil and often look like cats) or Hindu mythology (where demons are *really* scary and may be flesh-eating *pishachas*, or vampirish *vetalas* who make their homes in corpses, or shape-shifting cannibalistic *rakshasas*). Nevertheless, each tradition places demons within a detailed hierarchy, and it's generally understood that you don't want to meet up with one, in this life or the next.

Please use it in a sentence or two: Keep your hands off that ouija board, kids. It's possessed by demons (*Christian version*).

Keep your hands off that ouija board, kids. It's possessed by a *rakhasa* who wants to devour your face (*Hindu version*).

Not to be confused with: That shiny horned beast in the Tenacious D song "Tribute," who forces the boys to either play the

best song in the world or have their souls eaten. Demons are just not that interested in comedic rock opera.



EIGHTFOLD PATH

A traditional Buddhist teaching that gives eight practical tips to transcend suffering via the pursuit of nirvana. These tips or principles fall into three categories: *Wisdom* (right view, right intention); *Ethical Conduct* (right speech, right action, right livelihood); and *Mental Development* (right effort, right mindfulness, right concentration). Get all of these, uh, right and not only will you end suffering, but you'll reach a higher level of existence in the next life. And maybe the one after that. Right on.

Not to be confused with: *The Eight Immortals*, legendary figures in Chinese mythology who lived on the mystical Penglai Mountain-Island and had individual powers, just like the Superfriends but without the tights and capes.



EMBALMING

The practice of chemically preserving a corpse after death in order to minimize decay. While embalming is still used today to prepare human remains for presentation, it first became popular in ancient Egyptian culture. The Egyptians combined embalming with mummification, believing the body to be the eternal night-time refueling station of a person's soul (known as the *Ba*), after it had gone forth into the afterlife during the day-time. Without an embalmed body, the *Ba* would be damned to rootless roving around in the afterlife, like some of those hipster backpacker kids in South Asia, only not as scary.

Please use it in a sentence: Most people don't like to think about embalming, probably because of those nasty stories about

how the ancient Egyptians extracted a corpse's brains using hooks inserted through the nose.

Not to be confused with: *Taxidermy*, which involves preserving animals shot by hunters. If there's any "going forth by day" of these animals' souls, then those hunting lodges filled with stuffed-and-mounted elk heads and bear skins are horrifying places indeed.



ESCHATOLOGY

The branch of theology concerned with the end of the world, the final destiny of humanity, the **apocalypse**, and other cheery topics. Almost every world religion—from the ancient Aztecs to Zoroastrianism—has something to say about the End Times. It's rarely encouraging.

Please use it in a sentence: Remember when Gerard got all into eschatology and started sending us those e-mails identifying Oprah as the Antichrist?

Not to be confused with: *Thanatology*, the academic study of death, usually as it relates to individuals. Eschatology is to thanatology what thermonuclear detonation is to a 4th of July sparkler.



ETERNAL LIFE

The unending existence awaiting humanity, based on the belief that physical death is only one stop on a really long bus ride that continues for pretty much ever. In **Christianity**, eternal life comes through salvation offered by the death and resurrection of Jesus Christ. In **Islam**, eternal life is often described as a "blissful here-after," earned by performing good deeds and adhering to the **Five Pillars of Islam**. In cyclical religions like Buddhism, eternal life is implied by **reincarnation** from one life to another, depending on the quality of your **karma**.

Nevertheless, most religions promise an encore to your present life by way of an everlasting future. Hopefully, this future comes equipped with a full schedule of activities and a Netflix subscription, because eternity can be a loooooong time.

Please use it in a sentence: Before he died, Granddad insisted that we hide his baseball glove, sand wedge, and a few range balls in his casket, fearing he'd run out of ways to pass the time during his eternal life.

Not to be confused with: *Eternal Fire*, a punishment prepared for the “devil and his angels” and awaiting those who fail to attend to the needy, as threatened by Jesus in Matthew 25:41.¹² While you're at it, don't confuse *Eternal Fire* with “Eternal Flame,” a tormenting mid-'80s song by the Bangles.



FIVE PILLARS OF ISLAM

The five fundamental obligations every good Muslim must follow in the pursuit of **eternal life**.¹³ The first is the *Shahada*, the creedal profession of faith (“There is no God but Allah.”). The second one is *Salat*, the compulsory prayers offered five times a day. The third is *Zakat*, charitable giving toward the needy. The fourth is *Hajj*, a pilgrimage to Mecca at least once before death by every able-bodied Muslim. And the fifth is *Saum*, the ritual fast during the month of Ramadan.

Please use it in a sentence: If the National Football League ever expanded into a Muslim nation and one of the resulting teams

12. “Eternal fire” is also promised, in Jude 1:7, to towns like Sodom and Gomorrah who “gave themselves up to sexual immorality and perversion.” So watch out.

13. Only the majority Sunni Muslims observe the official Five Pillars. Minority Shi'a Muslims list up to ten practices they must perform. There may be fewer Shi'a numerically, but they're twice as holy as the Sunnis.

had an especially ferocious offensive line, they would totally be nicknamed the “Five Pillars of Islam.”

Not to be confused with: The mythological *Five Pillows of Islam*, thought to exist in the ancient bedchamber of a legendary imam, probably lost to the scouring desert sands of the Middle East, and possibly the result of a mistranslation anyway.



FOUR NOBLE TRUTHS

A fundamental teaching in Buddhism, based on what Guatama Buddha learned when he got all enlightened. The gist of his transcendental education can be summed up by four distinct truths. One: There is such a thing as suffering. Two: Suffering has a cause (attachment to silly transitory notions like “the world” or “the self” or “chocolate”). Three: Suffering can eventually be stopped, suppressed, or otherwise escaped from, via enlightenment. Four: Enlightenment can be achieved by way of the Eightfold Path.

So it’s a little misleading, because while there are only four truths, the last one is an eight-parter.

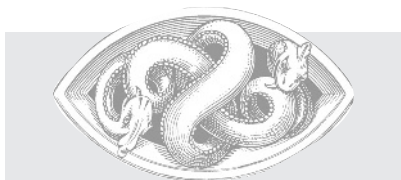
Not to be confused with: The *Five Pillars of Islam*, the *Three Persons of the Trinity*, or the *Oceanic Six*.



GHOST

The disembodied spirit of a dead person, often thought to be a visible manifestation of the soul, which may or may not resemble Hamlet’s father, the Stay-Puft Marshmallow Man, or (spoiler alert!) Bruce Willis. Ghosts and ghost stories appear in almost every culture and religious tradition and represent the idea that the soul is distinctly separate from the body and able to exist in some fashion even after the physical body is gone. **eternal life.**

There are lots of theories about ghosts, but one of the most popular ones suggests a ghost has unfinished business on earth and, as a result, exists in some netherworld between the living and the dead.



Most people don't believe in ghosts, but the biblical writers did. According to 1 Samuel 28, King Saul used a medium to put him in touch with the dead prophet Samuel, who ends up "coming up out of the ground" (NIV) and scolding Saul for disturbing his eternal rest.

Please use it in a sentence: Sharon used to believe in ghosts, until Scooby-Doo ruined them for her forever.

Not to be confused with: *The Holy Ghost*, an old-fashioned name for the third person of the Christian Trinity, also known as the Holy Spirit. The Holy Ghost is usually represented by a white dove. As opposed to a white bed sheet.



HARROWING OF HELL

The Christian doctrine, mentioned in the "He descended into hell" part of the Apostle's Creed, that Jesus spent time in hell during the three days between his death and resurrection. The idea gets some mention in the New Testament, most notably in a couple of references in the book of Acts stating that Jesus wasn't "abandoned" to the grave,¹⁴ and a statement, in 1 Peter, about Jesus preaching to

14. Acts 2:27, 31.

the spirits in prison.¹⁵ The doctrine also draws from passages in the apocryphal Gospel of Nicodemus, which only pasty scholars and theologians read.

Traditionally, the “harrowing” part means Jesus invaded or despoiled the place by releasing the patriarchs—Abraham and Moses and other righteous folk who died before Jesus supplied the means of salvation to mankind—from an intermediate **Purgatory**-like state. Then Jesus triumphantly marched them right up to the Pearly Gates. Best upgrade ever.

Please use it in a sentence: If you ask a Christian to explain to you the “harrowing of hell,” he or she will look at you funny, kind of like when you ask them to explain the line referring to it in the Apostle’s Creed.

Not to be confused with: Any other jailbreaks, robberies, break-ins, or rescue attempts throughout history. Sorry, heist-movie wannabes. Your technological advancement and super-complicated timelines are impressive, but you just can’t compete with the Son of God crashing the doors of hell in order to bust Elijah out of Satan’s shackles.



HINDUISM

The major faith tradition of India and the world’s third largest religion behind Christianity and Islam, with nearly a billion practitioners. Its doctrines are spread across a pretty broad spectrum of theological beliefs, with schools of thought that might be described as **monotheistic**—there’s one Absolute Reality behind everything, though it may show up in the form of different

15. 1 Peter 3:19–20, 4:6.

deities—and others that are flat-out **polytheistic**.¹⁶ But most Hindus believe each person has a true self, the **atman**, which will be reincarnated from one body to another after death (**samsara**). The overall goal of the atman's existence is to attain **moksha**, or liberation, from the **karma**-related cycle. Yoga may or may not be involved.

More than 90 percent of the world's Hindus live in India and Nepal. An estimated one million Hindus live in the United States.

Hindus you've probably heard of: Deepak Chopra, Mahatma Gandhi, George Harrison, Aishwarya Rai, J. D. Salinger, M. Night Shyamalan, Vijay Singh.



INCORRUPT

Describing a body—usually that of a **saint**—that does not decompose, decay, stink, or otherwise perform as expected after death. A remarkable number of the corpses of Christian saints are believed to be incorrupt and are often on display at their shrines. To qualify, a body must remain inexplicably soft and flexible a substantial time after death. In order to figure out whether a body is incorrupt, of course, the remains must be exhumed. Which means that whole “rest in peace” thing? A total crock if you're holy.

Please use it in a sentence: The famously incorrupt body of Saint Catherine of Bologna, a Mother Superior who died in 1463, has been posed into a sitting position behind glass at her shrine at Bologna's Chapel of the Poor Clares, which isn't creepy at all.

Not to be confused with: The potentially nondecomposing, decay-resistant, surgically altered bodies of Hollywood residents. They're creepy, but they're not saints.

16. Some academics argue that Hinduism really shouldn't even be described as a religion. It's more like a crazy collection of related traditions, practices, and philosophies.

**ISLAM**

Like **Christianity**, Islam is a monotheistic religion that evolved from the life and teachings of an individual—in this case, the prophet Muhammad, who was born in the sixth century and died in the seventh, and who left behind a collection of revelatory writings known as the Qu’ran. Muslims pledge allegiance to God (Allah) and Muhammad, and adhere to the **Five Pillars of Islam**; Muslims hope to be resurrected after death and gain entrance to paradise, called Jannah, based on their good works and the mercy of Allah.

Unfaithful Muslims will be doomed to Jahannam, the hell of Islam, but will eventually be allowed into paradise based on Allah’s forgiveness. Non-Muslims have no such luck. For them, it’s Jahan-nam forever.

Islam is the world’s second largest religion, with an estimated 1.5 billion members divided among two main branches: the majority Sunni Muslims and minority Shi’a Muslims. It is the dominant religion in North Africa and the Middle East.

Muslims you’ve probably heard of: Muhammad Ali, John Coltrane, Mos Def, Osama bin Laden, Queen Noor, Malcolm X.

**JUDAISM**

The monotheistic parent-religion of **Christianity**, dating back to a shared lineage with the characters of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob described in the Torah (which Christians know as the first five books of the Old Testament). Judaism claims an estimated 13 million people, spread across several divisions of practice and theology, including Orthodox, Reform, Conservative, and Reconstructionist versions. A primary distinction between Jews and Christians is that Christians believe Jesus to be the long-awaited Messiah, come to

establish God's kingdom on earth. But Jews think Christians totally jumped to conclusions about Jesus and are still waiting for the Messiah to arrive.

Like most Christians and Muslims, Jews believe the soul is eternal and await **resurrection** in the world to come, the messianic age known as *Olam Haba*. The righteous hope to take up residence in *Gan Eden* (the "Garden of Eden"), but only the really holy people go there directly. Most require a brief stay in *Sheol*, or *Gehinnom*, where they are purified and/or punished for up to twelve months. But no longer than that. Which is good.

The majority of Jews live in the United States and Israel.

Jews you've probably heard of: Michael Bloomberg, Sascha Baron Cohen, Bob Dylan, Adam Sandler, Sarah Silverman, Stephen Spielberg.



KARMA

The law of cause and effect common to Indian religious traditions (Buddhism, Hinduism, Jainism, Sikhism), stating that the actions you take in this life have a bearing on the next one. All of your deeds—good, bad, and enormously stupid—have repercussions on your future lives and, in fact, the whole karmic enchilada is wrapped around your past and present lives as well. It's the circle of life, friends, and it doesn't end until you attain the liberated state of **moksha**.

The good news of karma is that, if you do good things, you'll be rewarded in your future **reincarnations**. You can expect an attractive spouse, a beautiful family, and above-average wealth and prestige. The bad news is that, if you do bad things, you'll be punished in a future life. You could end up a crippled beggar, or the guy who cleans the elephant cage at the zoo, or a reality-show contestant. So behave.

Please use it in a sentence: Achieving beneficial karma is like depositing cash (good deeds) into a savings account in order to go on a great vacation, except instead of going to Disneyworld once you've saved up enough, you just die and then wake up as a baby somewhere and have to endure several months of not being able to feed or otherwise care for yourself, and it's not long before you realize infancy is *so* not that fun and even good karma results in, like, the worst vacation ever.

Not to be confused with: *Kama Sutra*, the ancient Indian Sanskrit text on love, male-female relationships, and acrobatic sexual positions. Though it must be said that anyone who lives according to the *Kama Sutra* is most likely benefiting from some decent karma.

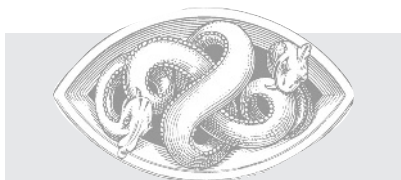


MARTYR

A person who gets killed or executed for his or her faith, from the Greek word for “witness.” In the early, persecution-heavy centuries of **Christianity**, martyrdom was frequent, and almost all of the Christian **saints** were martyrs. In **Islam**, adherents are expected to submit to the will of Allah, and part of this submission means a willingness to die if Allah has that in mind for them, especially while contending for the faith.

Whatever the religious system, martyrdom presupposes a belief in some kind of life after death—because why give up the material benefits of this life if there's not something to be gained on the other side? One of the benefits of Islamic martyrdom—particularly the controversial teachings that fuel violent extremists—is a guarantee of heaven.¹⁷ And in

17. Based on Suras 4:74: “Whoso fighteth in the way of Allah, be he slain or be he victorious, on him We shall bestow a vast reward” (English translation by Mohammed Marmaduke Pickthall).



It's commonly reported that Islamic martyrs can expect to be blessed with seventy-two beautiful, virginal, sexual companions (houri) in the afterlife. This traditional number supposedly comes from a statement that someone once heard referenced by a companion of Muhammad, who apparently overheard the prophet mention something about the number of virgins—so it's a vague and grapeviney reference that's more of a myth than anything else. In fact, one expert compares this to the tradition that Christians will wear wings and play harps upon being granted entrance to heaven.¹⁸

heaven, of course, a good Muslim will be greeted by marriage to “fair ones with wide, lovely eyes.”¹⁸ And not just two or three of these fair ones, but a full harem of them. So that's something to look forward to.

Please use it in a sentence or two: During catechism, little Justine used to daydream about someday becoming a martyr, until she learned that it might involve having molten lead poured down your throat and iron hooks plunged into your intestines. So instead, she started daydreaming about ponies.

Not to be confused with: A suicide bomber.



METEMPSYCHOSIS

A consonant-rich word from Greek philosophy referring to a concept called the “transmigration of souls,” wherein a person's soul

18. Suras 44:54 (Pickthall). These “fair ones” are commonly known in Arabic as *houri*.

19. Nydell, Margaret K. *Understanding Arabs: A Guide for Modern Times* (Boston: Intercultural Press, Inc., 2006), p. 109.

shimmies from one body to another after physical death. This second body may be human, of course, but it also may be an animal or, lacking a better option, something inanimate. Like a houseplant. Or a scary vintage automobile. At any rate, *metempsychosis* is the word you use when **reincarnation** doesn't sound impressive enough, or when you want to name-drop Plato, who mentioned it in *The Republic*.

See also: *Reincarnation*.



MOKSHA

The Sanskrit term referring to the emancipation of the **soul** from the cycle of living and dying and **reincarnation** and all those annoying aspects of earthly existence. Moksha is the state of release that all good Hindus, Buddhists, and other adherents of Indian religions strive for, except they may not precisely know it when they get there. Because experiencing the true nature of yourself and entering into a state of pure bliss in which you're no longer conscious of time and space but are instead enraptured by a profound oneness with the entire universe? It doesn't exactly happen within the limits of the five senses.

That's why moksha can only be achieved under the guidance of a guru who's achieved it himself. After all, someone has to tell you when to stop freeing yourself from the captivity of the material world so you can grab a bite to eat.

Please use it in a sentence: Janet attends yoga in hopes of achieving moksha, but I'm mainly interested in achieving the ability to see my toes again.

Not to be confused with: *Mocha*, the drinking of which may involve a substantial amount of bliss. Even better, it's the kind that actually *does* operate within the five senses, because you can taste it,

and smell it, and feel its luxurious warmth against the soft lines of your hand, and . . . oops, sorry. The *Pocket Guide* just about entered a state of oneness with the universe and had to pull back. This is just the first chapter, after all.



MONOTHEISM

Belief in the existence of only one god, as opposed to **polytheism**. **Christianity**, **Islam**, and **Judaism** are examples of monotheistic religions.

Please use it in a sentence: I'm down with monotheism, because it's hard enough to worship and obey one deity, let alone keep up with Krishna and Rama and Shiva and Kali and Ganesh and Ramachandra and all those other Hindu gods.



MORMONISM

A new-ish, distinctively American religion founded by Joseph Smith Jr., when an angel named Moroni led him to the discovery of some golden tablets—written in “Reformed Egyptian”—buried back in the fifth century in Manchester, New York.²⁰ Smith's translation of those tablets led to the Book of Mormon, out of which arose the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-Day Saints.

Their beliefs have a few elements in common with **Christianity**—Mormons consider themselves followers of Jesus Christ—but they've tacked on a few creative enhancements. For instance, they think Jesus came to America after he resurrected (way before Columbus), which meant his earliest followers and the true Church developed among Native Americans. Other interesting Mormon

20. A place not generally known for its abundance of ancient “Reformed Egyptian” artifacts. See pp. 68–69 in Chapter 3 for more about Joseph Smith.

beliefs include eternal marriage, baptisms for dead people, the eventual transformation of believers into gods, strict abstinence from alcohol and caffeine, and the necessity of polygamy—which used to be a big part of the faith but is no longer tolerated, except among crazy fundamentalist Mormons and on HBO.

There are nearly 13 million Mormons worldwide. Approximately half of them live in the United States.

Mormons you've probably heard of: Wilford Brimley, Orson Scott Card, Butch Cassidy, Steven R. Covey, Jon Heder, Katherine Heigl, Donnie and Marie Osmond, Mitt Romney, Ricky Schroder.



MUMMIFICATION

See *Embalming*.



NEAR-DEATH EXPERIENCE

A series of sensations related to imminent death, often involving levitation, bright lights, the singing of angels, warmth and security, some sort of life review involving the phrase “flashed before my eyes,” reunions with dead relatives, encounters with Jesus, and even the feeling of being separate from one’s body. And mixed into the experience of any of these elements is a sense that you’re already dead.

Near-death experiences have been documented by people undergoing surgery, being resuscitated from heart attacks, or suffering life-threatening accidents. Such experiences are either (1) totally legitimate albeit paranormal windows into the afterlife or (2) nothing more than brain-generated hallucinations. It depends upon who’s telling the story. Option 1 is lots more fun, and the *Pocket Guide* has a fondness for bright, warm floatingness, so for now, it’s the winner.

Please use it in a sentence: Jared has an irrational fear of having a near-death experience, so one way to really freak him out is to shine a flashlight in his face and start yelling “The light! The light!”

Not to be confused with: *Near-Birth Experience*, an actual phenomenon in which people claim to remember events occurring before conception, or during the process of birth, or while in the womb. You might know this by its other name: *making up crap*.



NECROMANCY

The ancient and spooky practice of trying to summon the deceased (or, in some cases, demons) in order to receive knowledge about the future, based on the idea that supernatural beings have secret access to information, on account of them not being bound to the normal physical constraints of space and time. Necromancy isn’t practiced much anymore—it’s too complicated, what with all those complex incantations and cryptic symbols and ritual sacrifices that pretty much only appeal to upper-level Wiccans—but it was a big deal back in the Middle Ages.

Please use it in a sentence: When I saw Lucy and her friends attempting to call forth the spirit of Don Knotts from inside a circle made of strips of squirrel flesh, I said to myself, “Necromancy!” and put a stop to that devilry.

Not to be confused with: *Nephomancy*, the interpretive art of divination using clouds to recognize omens or foretell the future. Nephomancy is perhaps most accurate when the future has soft, white, and/or fluffy qualities.



NEGATIVE CONFESSION

A recited moral code appearing in the Egyptian *Book of the Dead*. The confessor lists a variety of misdeeds he has *not* performed—thus

the “negative”—in order to be allowed entrance to the afterlife. The list is forty-two confessions long, including gems like *I have not slain men and women, I have made none to weep, I have not stolen cultivated land, I have not eaten the heart, I have not been an eavesdropper, and I have never raised my voice.*

Sure, you haven’t slain anyone, but have you *eavesdropped*? Hardcore, those Egyptians.

After the confession, the person’s heart was removed, placed on a scale, and weighed in relation to a feather. If it weighed more than a feather, it was still too full of sin. Entrance to paradise? Denied. And that’s “denied” in the sense of getting eaten by the ferocious demon Ammut.²¹

Not to be confused with: *The Ten Commandments*, another listy moral code that came around a few centuries later and which some academics suggest may have been influenced—along with all its *thou shalt not*s—by the Negative Confession.²²



NIRVANA

The definition of *nirvana* depends largely on the perspective of the person trying to achieve it. A Hindu seeking nirvana is looking to snuff out his full spectrum of attachment to the physical world—escaping passion, ignorance, anger, and hip-hop ringtones—so that his **soul**, or **atman**, can experience union with the divine. Nirvana is the empty, peaceful road toward the destination known as **moksha**.

A Buddhist believes the part about the soul is just a lot of silly talk, because the soul doesn’t really exist anyway. And guess what?

21. See p. 104 for details.

22. These same academics tend to cower when they make this suggestion, because who wants to go on record calling God a plagiarist?

For him, *nirvana* can be defined as finally beginning to understand, for yourself, the whole thing about the soul not existing.

So now you know: there is no soul. Next step? Pull out your life-time to-do list. Find the one that says: *Achieve a state of transcendental rest and liberation from temporal awareness.* And scratch that baby off.

You're welcome.

Please use it in a sentence: I was all excited about experiencing Nirvana once in the early '90s, but it turned out to be some lame cover band.

No, really, quit joking: We could tell the yogi was experiencing nirvana because he didn't even flinch when

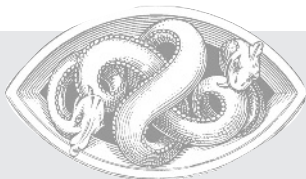
Craig shanked his Frisbee throw and the disc bounced right off the dude's forehead.



POLYTHEISM

Belief in the existence of multiple gods, as opposed to **monotheism**. **Hinduism** is often described as a polytheistic religion, with many gods either in service to the supreme deity, Brahman, or existing as various incarnations of Brahman.

Some suggest **Buddhism** is also polytheistic, since its texts speak



It's been stated before that there are 330 million gods in Hinduism, which is about 330 million too many to keep up with. That's not really the case, though. The Bhagavad Gita, a Hindu scripture, teaches that God dwells in the atman of each human. And at one point it was believed that there were 330 million people in the world, thus 330 million "gods" hanging out in all those atmans. It's sort of like saying there are 2 billion Jesuses because the Savior dwells in the heart of every Christian on earth.

of powerful supernatural beings like *devas* and *bodhisattvas* and since it tends to incorporate a full salad bar of local deities into its belief system. But others argue that Buddhism is an atheistic religion—one that denies any kind of eternal supreme being altogether. It's quite the controversy. But at least it's a transcendently peaceful one.

Please use it in a sentence: Buddhism may be confusing, but Greek mythology provides a clear example of polytheism, thanks to Zeus, Apollo, Aphrodite, and that whole dysfunctional bunch of Olympians.



PREDESTINATION

The idea that a person's actions and eternal destiny have been divinely foreordained from the moment of creation, based on a belief in God's omniscience and control over the universe. One person will be saved and given a pre-punched ticket for heaven. Another finds out he's already booked on the smoky train. And there's nothing either passenger can do about it.

In Christianity, the hardest-of-hard-core beliefs in predestination are usually associated with the teachings of the sixteenth-century reformer John Calvin. In Islam, it's standard teaching that nothing happens outside the will of Allah, who ordains everything—including one's eternal destiny.

Please use it in a sentence: You might hear a believer in predestination say things like "If Allah wills . . ." or "God has a plan for me" or "Why even bother?"

Not to be confused with: *Prestdigitation*—otherwise known as sleight-of-hand—which can be, in the expert hands of some practitioners, on the spine-chilling verge of seeming supernatural.

But it won't earn you a place in heaven, no matter how good you are at the Zarrow Shuffle.²³



PURGATORY

A teaching of Roman Catholic **Christianity** that there is a middle ground between heaven and hell for those who died as believers but still had a few lingering—yet totally forgivable—sins to eliminate. In short, Purgatory acts as a post-death purification to clean you up for heaven. Sounds good, but Protestant Christians think this is a lot of bunk. First, they argue, it's not really in the Bible. And second, aren't you clean enough anyway, thanks to the forgiveness of Jesus?

Please use it in a sentence or two: You might argue that the temporary, purifying flames of Purgatory are way preferable to the eternal, punishing flames of hell, but I'm pretty sure flames of any persuasion are not much fun.

Not to be confused with: *Predatory*, a word used to describe anything related to a predator. It is likely that no one would ever confuse this with Purgatory, unless the rules changed, and instead of a person's sins being purified by fire, they were instead devoured by large jungle cats. Which would be awesome to contemplate but still not too enjoyable.

Also not to be confused with: *Limbo*, which is another theoretical middle ground in Christian theology, and which is described in greater detail on p. 112 in chapter 4.



REINCARNATION

The belief that some independent, essential, nonphysical part of personhood—for instance, the **soul**, or the self—survives physical

23. Shout-out: card trick nerds!

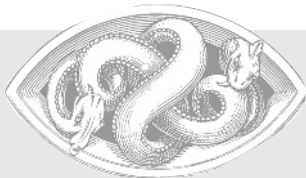
death only to find its way into another body and another lifetime. Known by the Sanskrit term *samsara*, the cycle of rebirth from one life into the next is central to Eastern religions like **Hinduism**, Jainism, and Taoism. You might think that reincarnation was also central to **Buddhism**, but you'd be wrong on a technicality, because Buddhists don't believe in a permanent soul. Replace soul with "consciousness," though, and Buddhists are totally on-board.

Anyway, reincarnation is probably most prevalent in Hinduism. Within this system, the cycle of birth and death and soul-transfer continues until a being finally realizes that his or her true self isn't really about the outward body, or its pleasures, or its demands, but instead has to do with the inward, immortal soul. This is called **moksha**. And once you get there, all the rein-

carnating stops and you can rest. Hopefully by this point, your **karma** has earned you the body of a supermodel, as opposed to, say, a dung beetle. Because it's easier to rest when you're spectacularly hot.

Please use it in a sentence: Jeff figured his cat-like reflexes, passion for tuna, and general aversion to authority were evidence of his previous reincarnation from an Egyptian housecat into the body of an accountant.

Not to be confused with: *Carnation Instant Breakfast*, a creamy, delicious health drink containing essential vitamins and minerals.



Some West African traditions believe families may be plagued by "repeater children"—souls that keep being reborn into the same family following the deaths of infants. Wow. Just composing that sentence gave the Pocket Guide chills.

Unfortunately, there's nothing "creamy" or "delicious" about reincarnation. Unless you come back as pudding.



RESURRECTION

The ultimate goal of **Christianity**, **Judaism**, and **Islam**, in which eternal **souls** will eventually be restored to some form of their original, individual selves in order to enjoy eternity. Christians base this belief on the resurrection of Jesus Christ three days after his crucifixion, including the expectation that Christ's Second Coming includes physical resurrection of dead believers—and that those new bodies will get to participate in the "new heaven and new earth," as described in the New Testament book of Revelation.²⁴

Judaism also carries the hope of resurrection when the Messiah—not Jesus, thank you very much—finally appears, ushering them into his eternal kingdom. Islam teaches a universal resurrection at the world's end, followed by the division at Judgment between faithful Muslims and infidels, with everyone going their separate ways in their resurrected bodies. And Zoroastrians get into resurrection a little, too, but how many Zoroastrians do you really know?

Please use it in a sentence or two: Fearful he'd be left with nothing to reanimate at the resurrection, Belinda took a hard stand against Uncle Charlie's cremation. She also took a hard stand against him leaving all his money to the Baptist church, but that was less successful.

Not to be confused with: *Zombies.*

24. Revelation 21:1.



SAINT

In **Christianity**, a term used to describe any follower of Jesus, from the Latin word *sanctus*, which means holy or consecrated. But the most popular use of *saint* refers to a righteous person recognized in an official capacity by the Church for having displayed impressive holiness and virtue. Most saints are viewed as being just as active post-death as they were before meeting their Maker. Saints perform miracles; watch over the cities, churches, occupations, and illnesses over which they've been made patrons; and assist living humans in getting prayers delivered to (and answered by) God. It's assumed that they're experts at this kind of thing because they're (1) super-holy, (2) already dead, and (3) probably tighter with the Almighty than you.

Please use it in a sentence or two: Confronted with a nasty pimple outbreak the day before the prom, Eliza appealed to Saint Anthony the Abbot, patron saint of skin diseases, to clear up her complexion. And with Anthony's assistance—not to mention a thick application of concealer—everything turned out just fine.

Not to be confused with: *Gus Van Sant*, who may not be on speaking terms with God, but might be able to pull some strings, in a pinch, with Kevin Smith.



SALVATION

The ultimate and eternal goal of the practitioners of most world religions, despite there being (apparently) a bunch of different ways to achieve it. Christians view salvation as the free gift of deliverance from **sin**, made possible through faith in Jesus Christ, based on his death and **resurrection**. Jews anticipate salvation in their longing

for a coming Messiah. Muslims rely on their adherence to the **Five Pillars of Islam** and the mercy of Allah on the day of judgment.

Buddhists and Hindus don't really view salvation through the lens of sin and judgment, but rather as something that may be achieved through enlightenment, **nirvana**, **moksha**, or other words you might hear in yoga class.

Please use it in a sentence or two: In his pursuit of salvation, Chuck has become, in order, a practicing Jew, Christian, Muslim, Hindu, and Buddhist. What he forgot to become was a decent guy.

Not to be confused with: *Salivation*. That extra "i" is pretty important when it comes to your eternal destiny.²⁵



SAMSARA

See *Reincarnation*.



SÉANCE

A meeting of spiritual-minded folks for the purpose of communicating with the dead. Usually, a medium is present to smooth the communication process, as ghosts and regular living people don't always speak on the same wavelength. This medium—usually a person with (alleged) psychic gifts, who may or may not be a professional²⁶—may go into a trance or write unconsciously on a pad or perform an interpretive dance in order to relay some message from the beyond.

Séances became popular in the late 1800s and early 1900s, thanks to an explosion of interest in spirit communication beginning with the media attention surrounding the Fox Sisters (see p. 69 in Chapter 3) and other notable spiritualists.

25. Except for Buddhists, who don't believe in the existence of the "I." Rimshot!

26. . . . and who may or may not be a total fraud (if history is any indicator).

Please use it in a sentence or two: It's best to turn the lights down during a séance, or to rely only on candlelight, because ghosts are more comfortable in dark rooms. Also, low light makes it lots easier for fraudulent mediums to fake the spooky stuff.

Not to be confused with: *Beyoncé*, who also does her best work in dark rooms but who rarely imparts information from the beyond. Unless one considers bootyliciousness an example of otherworldly communication.



SIN

In Christian, Jewish, and Islamic theology, any thought, word, or action that is contrary to God's plan or commandments. Traditionally, Christians view sin as *universal* (everyone does it) and *pervasive* (it can pop up anywhere at any time during any activity, even while—*crap*, there it goes). Even further, sin is not just a choice—a refusal to live according to God's desires—but a condition of humanity. We're born into it, and it's a barrier between people and God.²⁷ This understanding of sin is rejected by Judaism and Islam, however, which view it as more of an individual action than a universal condition.

In terms of the afterlife, people who die in a sinful state are thought to be headed for hell, where they'll be punished. Christian believers who trust Jesus Christ for the forgiveness of their sins go to heaven. Faithful Muslims go to heaven, too. But probably not the same heaven as Christians, because that would be awkward.

Please use it in a sentence or two: Is it a sin to lust after candy bars? Because I would totally risk eternal damnation for a mouthful of chewy nougat.

27. This is known in Christianity as the doctrine of original sin, based on scriptural passages like Romans 5:12.

Not to be confused with: *Sin*, the ancient bearded Babylonian moon god who rode around on a flying bull. He's neither universal, pervasive, or . . . real.



SIN EATERS

In ye olden days in the British Isles, people who died with unforgiven sin were thought to wander around in a type of Purgatory, unable to enjoy paradise or bliss until they had been freed from their sins. So a person called the “sin eater” would perform the ritual of consuming a small amount of bread and drink at a person’s death bed, a symbolic action that transferred the dying person’s sin upon himself. This weirdly metaphorical practice lasted until the early 1900s.

Please use it in a sentence: Caught sneaking a hot dog into a memorial service for his great aunt Lydia, Michael tried to excuse his behavior by telling everyone he was a sin eater.

Not to be confused with: *Eating* for recreational or nutritional purposes.²⁸



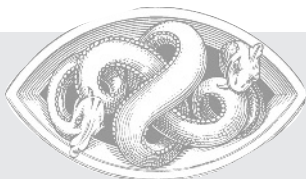
SOUL

The internal essence of a living being that, in many religious and/or philosophical systems, is immortal and survives in some form after death—where it may be judged, rewarded, punished, ferried across a metaphorical underground river, or launched into another physical body via **reincarnation**. Modern science is skeptical about the existence of an immortal soul, preferring to refer to it as “consciousness” or “the mind” or “the thing Voldemort divided up into horcruxes.”

28. Admit it: You totally thought the *Pocket Guide* would go with “Death Eaters” here, from the Harry Potter books. Nerd.

Please use it in a sentence or two: When Dan told us he'd sold his soul to the Devil in exchange for immortality, we laughed because Dan was such a joker, until Dan's eyes turned yellow, his head spun around, and he incinerated Lester with a blast of sulfuric breath. We didn't laugh then, because the joke had gone way too far.

Not to be confused with: Soul, the musical love-child of the funky relationship between gospel music and rhythm and blues, and of whom James Brown is the godfather.



In the early 1900s, citing the results of a series of highly disputed scientific experiments that were actually reported in the New York Times, a Massachusetts physician named Duncan MacDougall announced that a person lost approximately 21 grams in mass at the moment of death. That amount represented the weight of the soul, he hypothesized, and the difference was due to the soul exiting the body. It makes for a cool anecdote, if you leave out the part where a crazy Scottish doctor won't let you die in peace but keeps hoisting you up onto a scale every time you let out a death-wheeze.



THANATOLOGY

The academic study of dying and death as it relates to humans, from *Thanatos*, the Greek god of death.²⁹ As far as scientific disciplines go, it's a fairly new one that hardly existed until the turn of the twentieth century. Even then, it didn't catch on much until World War II, when suddenly death was on everyone's mind.

29. He had a twin brother named Hypnos, the god of sleep. "Oh, great," the other deities used to say. "Here come Thanatos and Hypnos. Those guys are such downers."

Thanatology engages a variety of disciplines, from sociology and psychology to medicine and theology. Despite this breadth, it maintains a pretty low profile. After all, very few people like to think about death, so no one's exactly dying to get into the field. (Sorry.)

Please use it in a sentence or two: When Don told us he was pursuing a career in thanatology, we responded the way anyone would. We told him to quit making up fields of study.

Not to be confused with: *Thanos*, the fictional alien supervillain from the Marvel Comics universe. He's well acquainted with death, too, but not in a professional or metaphorical way. It's more of a literal "let me introduce you to my lovely female companion, Death" kind of way.



ZOMBIE

A soulless reanimated corpse, typically made that way thanks to a supernatural spell, a science experiment gone wrong, a killer disease, or George Romero. Zombies either move really slowly or blindingly fast, sport tattered clothing and decomposing flesh, and can't communicate further than a baleful grunt or harrowing moan.

You probably think zombies only exist in movies, but adherents of the Voodoo folk religion believe the dead can be revived by powerful wicked sorcerers.³⁰ So try not to die around any powerful wicked Voodoo sorcerers.

Please use it in a sentence or two: Don't bother speaking to Lesley before her first cup of coffee. She's a total zombie, and not the freakish, high-speed kind, either.

Not to be confused with: *Rob Zombie*, the heavy-metal musician, film director, and all-around horror enthusiast. Try not to die around him, either.

30. See p. 61 in Chapter 3 for more Voodoo/zombie fun.

