

Comparison of Worldviews

Vidyadhar Tilak

“World Views on the Anvil of Inquiry.”

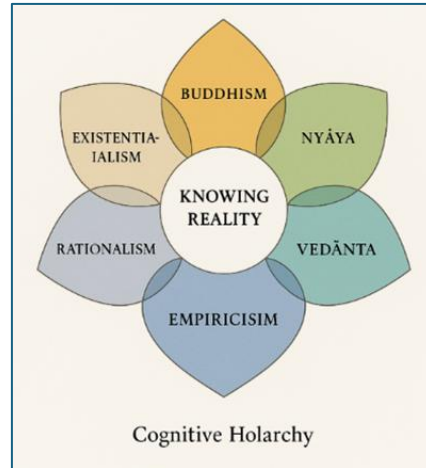
Abstract

This essay undertakes a comparative examination of six major worldviews—Buddhism, Nyāya, Vedānta, Empiricism, Rationalism, and Existentialism—each of which offers a distinct response to the perennial philosophical triad: What is Real? How do we Know? How should we Live? While each worldview is internally coherent and provides explanatory clarity within its own domain, none is complete in its capacity to address the full spectrum of human experience, from material existence to conscious significance. By analysing these worldviews in terms of their explanatory power, predictive capacity, and notional economy, the essay reveals their structural complementarities and tensions. It then argues that the contemporary philosophical task is not competitive selection but systemic integration. The proposed direction, PragmaSophy, seeks to construct a holonic architecture of knowledge in which diversity of perspectives becomes mutually enriching rather than mutually exclusive. Through this integrative framework, the essay lays the conceptual foundation for a synthesis that connects verity, value, and volition, and prepares the ground for a model of living knowledge adequate to the complexity of human existence.

1. Introduction:

Across civilisations and epochs, six illuminating worldviews have offered humanity coherent visions of existence. Of course these are not the only ones. We have chosen them here for comparison due to their distinct views. There are many petals in between two, almost forming a continuum. Each of the chosen ones proposes a distinct answer to the great triad of philosophical questions — *What is Real? How do we Know? How should we Live?* Each is internally complete within its own logic, yet partial when judged against the total spectrum of reality. Together they form a **Cognitive Holarchy** — an evolutionary panorama of human knowing.

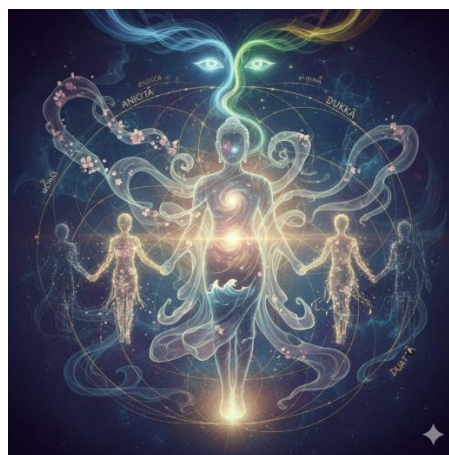
The Cognitive Holarchy of Worldviews depicts this panorama as a mandala of six petals around the nucleus “Knowing Reality”. Each petal symbolises a worldview — Buddhism, Nyāya, Vedānta, Empiricism, Rationalism, and Existentialism — radiating its distinctive light into the shared field of thought.



(Fig. 1 – The Cognitive Holarchy of Worldviews)

1.1 Buddhism — The Path of Dependent Becoming

Buddhism represents the most radical process-ontology in human thought. It denies the permanence of both objects and selves, replacing substance with *relation* and *becoming*. Everything that arises does so through *dependent origination* (*paṭicca-samuppāda*); nothing possesses intrinsic essence. Knowledge is not a conceptual construct but a disciplined observation of phenomena as they appear and pass away. Truth is experiential, not propositional. The highest knowing is direct seeing (*vipassanā*) of impermanence, non-self, and interdependence. Liberation (*nirvāṇa*) follows when craving and delusion cease, unveiling the non-clinging mind. Buddhism thus unites epistemology and ethics in a single praxis: to know rightly is to live compassionately. Reality, for Buddhism, is *process without permanence* — a self-organising flux whose insight yields freedom.



(Fig. 2 –The Flow of Dependent Origination)

1.2 Nyāya — The Discipline of Logical Realism

Nyāya is the rigorous architecture of realist reason in Indian philosophy. It asserts that the world exists independently of our thought and can be known through valid means of cognition (*pramāṇas*). These include perception, inference, comparison, and verbal testimony. Nyāya's genius lies in linking epistemology with ethics: right knowledge is both a cognitive achievement and a moral duty, for false knowing breeds suffering and disorder. Truth, therefore, is not subjective coherence but correspondence between judgment and object. By developing a sophisticated logic of inference and debate, Nyāya laid the groundwork for scientific reasoning in the Indian tradition. It occupies the middle ground between metaphysical speculation and empirical realism — validating both sensory experience and rational structure. In Nyāya's world, cognition is an ethical act: precision of reason and sincerity of intent mirror the order of the cosmos.



(Fig. 3 –From Logic to Liberation)

1.3 Vedānta — The Doctrine of Non-Dual Consciousness

Vedānta represents the *metaphysical zenith* of Indian thought. It begins where Nyāya stops — not with multiplicity but with unity. Consciousness (*Brahman*) alone is real; all appearances are its projection. The individual self (*ātman*) is not separate but identical with this absolute. Ignorance (*avidyā*) creates the illusion of duality, while knowledge (*jñāna*) dissolves it, revealing that the knower, known, and knowing are one. For Vedānta, liberation (*mokṣa*) is not escape but recognition — the awakening from dream to identity with the cosmic mind. Knowledge is thus self-realisation, the unveiling of the infinite within the finite. The epistemic and ethical converge here: to know truly is to love universally. Vedānta offers the most

comprehensive explanatory power (EP) but carries a heavy notional load (NL) and minimal predictive power (PP). It speaks to the timeless rather than the temporal, to unity rather than diversity, yet remains the crown of metaphysical idealism.



(Fig. 4 – Doctrine of Non-Dual Consciousness)

1.4 Empiricism — The Discipline of Observation

Empiricism represents the triumph of sensory verification in the modern age. It grounds knowledge in observation, experiment, and induction, claiming that nothing enters the mind except through experience. Reality is what can be perceived, measured, and repeated. This humility of method became the power of science: by restricting claims to the observable, it gained mastery over the physical world. Empiricism's explanatory power is limited to the external and measurable, yet its predictive strength is unparalleled. It has generated the technological civilisation that surrounds us. Its silence, however, is profound: it does not speak of purpose, value, or consciousness except as by-products of physical processes. Empiricism thus embodies the outer conquest of knowledge — vast in reach, narrow in meaning. It is indispensable for survival, but insufficient for wisdom.



(Fig. 5 – Empiricism: Observation and Experiment)

1.5 Rationalism — The Order of Reason

Rationalism represents the sovereignty of intellect. For the rationalist, truth is not found in the senses, which deceive, but in the structure of reason itself. From clear and distinct principles, knowledge unfolds deductively — necessary, universal, and eternal. Rationalism sees in mathematics and logic the language of the cosmos, where clarity is divinity. It offers intellectual order and certainty but risks alienation from lived reality. Its predictive power in abstract domains is unmatched, yet its explanatory warmth for human experience is minimal. Rationalism is the architecture of necessity: it builds worlds that must be, rather than those that are. It teaches that freedom lies in obedience to reason — a moral as well as intellectual calling. Where Empiricism secures the facts, Rationalism secures their form.



(Fig. 6 – Rationalism — The Order of Reason)

1.6 Existentialism — The Philosophy of Authentic Being

Existentialism is the rebellion of life against abstraction. It arises in the twentieth century as a protest against impersonal systems. For the existentialist, there is no predetermined essence; existence comes first. Meaning is not discovered but created through choice. Consciousness is the power to transcend given situations through freedom. Each person becomes the author of their own significance. This philosophy restores the first-person voice to being; truth is lived rather than deduced, verified in authenticity, not theory. Its focus on decision, anxiety, and responsibility gives existentialism high explanatory power in the moral and psychological realm, though low predictive capacity. It is the philosophy of freedom under finitude — the dignity of meaning born in the face of nothingness. Where Vedānta sees unity and Empiricism sees fact, Existentialism sees the trembling wonder of human self-authorship.



(Fig. 7 – Existentialism — The Philosophy of Authentic Being)

2. Comparative Synthesis: Mapping the Spectrum of Knowing

	Consistency	Completeness	Pragmatic Use	Parsimony	Explanatory Power (EP)	Predictive Power (PP)	Notional Load (NL)	Structural Trade-Off
Empiricism	High	Low	High	High	Medium	High	Low	Methodological Precision (High PP \leftrightarrow Low NL)
Nyāya	High	Low	High	High	Medium	High	Low	Methodological Precision (High PP \leftrightarrow Low NL)
Vedānta	Medium	High	Low	Low	High	Low	High	Metaphysical Boldness (High EP \leftrightarrow High NL)
Buddhism	Medium	High	Low	Low	High	Low	High	Metaphysical Boldness (High EP \leftrightarrow High NL)
Rationalism	Medium	Medium	Medium	Medium	Medium	Medium	Medium	Median Balance
Existentialism	Low	Low	High	Low	Low	Low	Low	Subjective Immediacy (Low PP \leftrightarrow Low NL)

(Fig. 8 – Comparative Matrix of Six Worldviews)

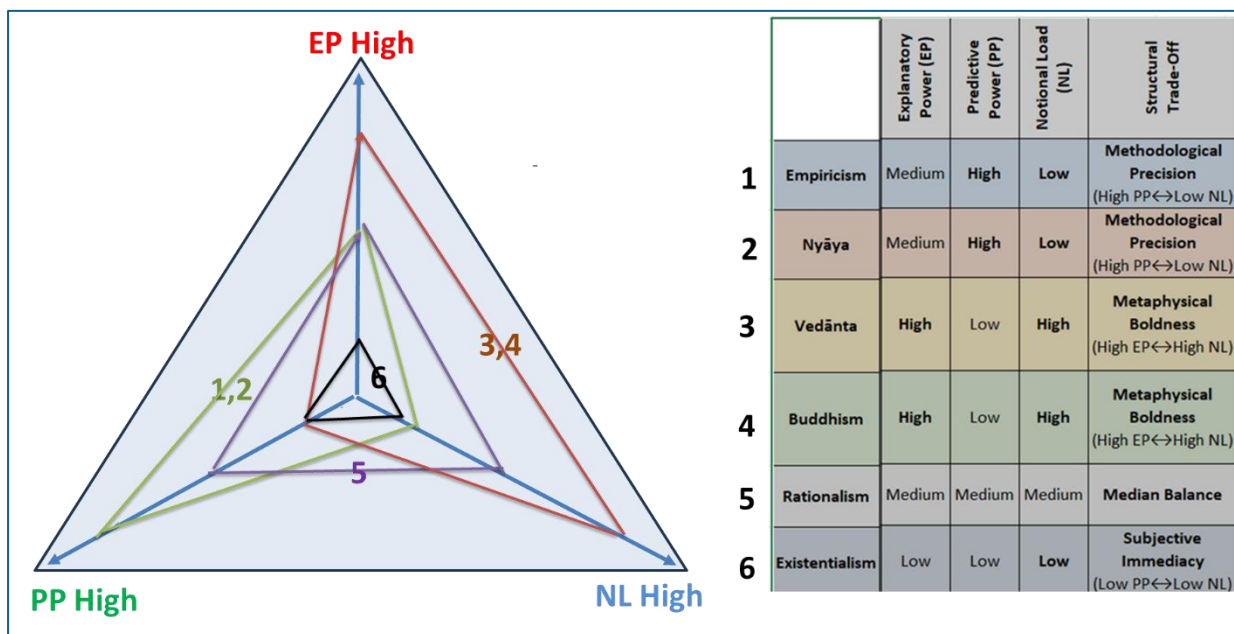
Comparative chart of six worldviews evaluated by Consistency, Completeness, Pragmatic Use, and Parsimony, yielding derived parameters: Explanatory Power (EP), Predictive Power (PP), and Notional Load (NL).

3. The challenge of Integration

When we place these worldviews in parallel, a striking pattern appears. Each illuminates a different dimension of human cognition. Empiricism and Nyāya maximise Predictive Power by trusting external realism and reliable justification. Vedānta and Buddhism, by contrast, expand Explanatory Power, seeing unity or process as the essence of being. Rationalism balances the structure of reason with limited experiential range, while Existentialism restores immediacy and authenticity but resists formalisation.

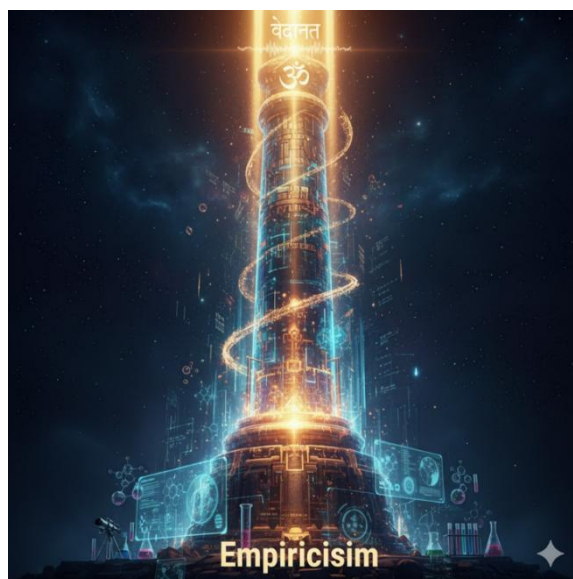
The comparative analysis reveals a structural triangle of trade-offs. High PP corresponds with methodological precision and low NL (Empiricism, Nyāya); high EP demands metaphysical boldness and heavier NL (Vedānta, Buddhism); subjective immediacy in Existentialism lowers NL yet restricts PP. Rationalism occupies the median.

No worldview achieves all three virtues simultaneously. This shortfall is not failure but invitation — to transcend fragmentation through systemic synthesis.



(Fig. 9 –The Challenge of Integration)

4. The Ascent of explanatory power



(Fig. 10 – The explanatory Ascent)

A vertical hierarchy showing each worldview’s cognitive altitude—from sensory correlation (Empiricism) to unitive consciousness (Vedānta).

Each worldview occupies a cognitive altitude. From sensory realism to unitive consciousness. The Mind Holarchy unfolds — from *fact* to *freedom*. This is the great ascent of knowing — the journey from matter to meaning.

On the question of what is real, Empiricism and Nyāya converge upon external realism — one by induction, the other by valid inference. Vedānta asserts non-dual consciousness as the only true substratum; Buddhism dissolves both matter and mind into dependent becoming. Rationalism equates reality with the necessary structures of thought, while Existentialism relocates it to lived engagement and responsibility.

Each worldview thereby occupies a level in the Mind Holarchy: Empiricism at the sensory base, Nyāya at logical mediation, Rationalism at conceptual order, Buddhism at processual insight, Existentialism at moral self-awareness, and Vedānta at unitive realisation. Together, they map the vertical ascent of knowing — from fact to freedom.

5. The Source of Value and the Goal of Life

Every worldview contains an image of the good life. Existentialism locates value in authentic choice within finitude; Buddhism in liberation from suffering through mindfulness and compassion; Vedānta in self-realisation and the unity of all being; Nyāya in right knowledge and right action aligned with realism; Empiricism in applied flourishing and pragmatic mastery; Rationalism in universal moral reason



(Fig. 11 The Values and Goals of Life)

6. Synthesis: The Incompleteness of Single Worldviews

Every worldview is internally coherent yet externally incomplete. Empiricism and Rationalism achieve coherence and predictability but fall short of existential resonance. Vedānta and Buddhism attain profound explanatory scope but sacrifice empirical testability. Nyāya bridges method and metaphysics but remains dualistic. Existentialism offers authenticity and moral intensity but lacks systemic architecture. Each addresses part of the real, none the whole. This incompleteness is not a flaw but an evolutionary necessity — the very tension from which PragmaSophy arises as an integrative synthesis of living knowledge.

7. Transition: From Fragmented to Systemic Knowing



(Fig. 12 – From Fragmented to Systemic Knowing)

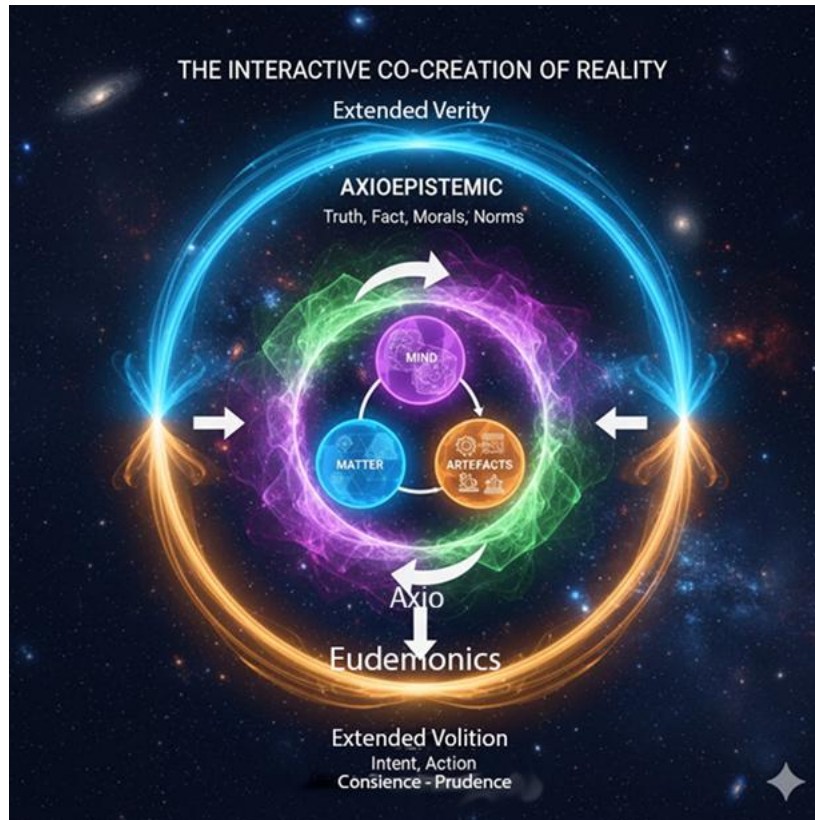
A two-panel bridge: on the left, six dispersed circles representing fragmented knowings; on the right, a triadic holon of Matter, Mind, and Meaning joined by a luminous bridge titled “Systemic Adequacy.”

Every civilisation has pursued its supreme aspiration — truth, liberation, authenticity, or control — but the modern task is not to choose one over another; it is to weave them into a coherent ecology of knowledge. Integration demands *systemic adequacy*: a framework capable of coupling existence, experience, and significance as co-evolving dimensions of one reality. PragmaSophy establishes this adequacy through three methodological requirements:

- (1) **Triadic coverage**, including all domains of being.
- (2) **Bidirectional adequacy**, balancing outward prediction with inward explanations.
- (3) **Economy of notions**, achieving conceptual sufficiency with minimal metaphysical inflation.

These principles form the operational charter for the next stage — the PragmaSophic model.

8. Recapitulation:



(Fig. 12– The PragmaSophic Holarchy)

A nested holonic model uniting Verity (Truth–Fact), Value (Moral–Norm), and Volition (Intent–Action–Conscience–Prudence) within concentric reciprocity; outer field annotated as Existence, Experience, and Significance.

Pragmasophy thus transforms philosophy from the pursuit of final certainty into the cultivation of systemic adequacy — from rigid doctrines to living knowledge architectures. The eight axioms act as scaffolds for **Model–Pragmasophy**, the next synthesis that will couple Verity, Value, and Volition into a self-correcting holarchy of knowing and being. This model will bridge explanatory depth with predictive clarity — an instrument for conscious evolution in an unfinished universe.

“World Views on the Anvil of Inquiry.”

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Technical Terms

English Term	(Sanskrit Term)	Short Definition
Reality	वास्तवता	The fundamental nature of what exists, whether material, mental, or processual.
Knowledge	ज्ञान	Justified awareness of reality obtained through experience, inference, or insight.
Conduct / Living	आचार	The manner in which one ought to live based on one's understanding of reality and value.
Cognitive Holarchy	ज्ञान-दर्शन-सोपान	A layered structure of worldviews arranged by their cognitive altitude and explanatory depth.
Holon	अंशि-अंश	A unit that is simultaneously a whole and a part within a systemic hierarchy.
Systemic Integration	समग्र-ज्ञान-संश्लेषण	The synthesis of multiple worldviews into a unified architecture of knowledge.
Triadic Coverage	अस्तित्व-अनुभव-अर्थ त्रय	Inclusion of existence, experience, and significance in a single framework.
Notional Load (NL)	आधार-भार	The conceptual weight or metaphysical assumptions required by a worldview.
Explanatory Power (EP)	व्याप्ति-शक्ति	The scope and depth with which a worldview accounts for diverse phenomena.
Predictive Power (PP)	पूर्वानुमान-शक्ति	The extent to which a worldview can generate reliable, testable predictions.
Mind Holarchy	ज्ञान-चित्त सोपान	The ascending hierarchy of cognitive worldviews from sense-based knowing to unitive consciousness.
Dependent Origination	प्रतीत्यसमुत्पाद	Doctrine that all phenomena arise interdependently without intrinsic essence.
Impermanence	अनित्य	The Buddhist principle that everything is transient and constantly changing.
Non-Self	अनात्म	The absence of a permanent, unchanging personal essence.
Nirvāṇa	निर्वाण	Liberation achieved through cessation of craving and delusion.
Right Knowledge	प्रमा	Cognition that accurately corresponds to objects in the world.
Means of Cognition	प्रमाण	Valid methods of knowing: perception, inference, comparison, and testimony.
Inference	अनुमान	Knowledge derived through logical relation between signs and their referents.
Testimony	शब्द	Reliable verbal knowledge from an authoritative source.
Brahman	ब्रह्म	The non-dual absolute consciousness posited as ultimate reality in Vedānta.
Ātman	आत्मा	The inner self identical with Brahman in Advaita Vedānta.
Ignorance	अविद्या	Misapprehension of the non-dual reality as multiplicity.

Self-Realisation	आत्म-ज्ञान	Recognition of one's identity with non-dual consciousness.
Observation	निरीक्षण	Empirical registration of phenomena through the senses.
Experiment	प्रयोग	Controlled intervention to test hypotheses in empiricism.
Induction	सामान्यतोदृष्ट	Derivation of general principles from recurrent observations.
Reason	तर्क	Structured use of logic to arrive at universal truths.
Deduction	निगमन	Deriving necessary conclusions from given axioms.
Authenticity	स्व-तत्त्व-निष्ठा	Living in alignment with one's freely chosen values.
Freedom	स्वातन्त्र्य	Capacity for self-determined action and meaning-creation.
Meaning-Creation	अर्थ-सृष्टि	Existential act of assigning significance through choice.
Fragmented Knowing	खण्डित-ज्ञान	Disconnected worldview components lacking systemic coherence.
Systemic Synthesis	समग्र-संश्लेषण	Integration of multiple worldviews into a holistic model.
Matter–Mind–Meaning Triad	भूत-चित्त-अर्थ-त्रय	The threefold structure of reality emphasised in PragmaSophy.
Verity Space	सत्य-तथ्य	The domain comprising truth, fact, moral, and norm.
Value Space	मूल्य-क्षेत्र	The domain governs morals, norms, and ideals.
Volition Space	संकल्प-क्रिया-क्षेत्र	The domain of intent, action, conscience, and prudence.
Cognitive Altitude	ज्ञान-उन्नति	Level of abstraction and insight at which a worldview operates.
Metaphysical Inflation	अति-तत्त्व-कल्पना	Addition of unnecessary or excessive concepts to explain reality.
Consistency	सामञ्जस्य	Internal logical coherence of a worldview.
Completeness	पूर्णता	Extent to which a worldview addresses the full range of philosophical questions.

Appendix: Reference Big Qs and Small Qs used for Benchmarking

The Eight Big Qs (Universal / Philosophical): These questions address the fundamental nature of reality and existence.

1. **Ultimate Reality:** What is the ultimate reality? (Is it material, spiritual, dual, or beyond categorization?)
2. **Nature of Self:** What is the nature of self? (Is there an enduring soul/consciousness, or is it a stream of momentary experiences?)

3. **Epistemology:** How can we know truth? (What are the valid sources of knowledge: perception, reason, or revelation?)
4. **Cosmology:** What is the origin of the universe? (Did it come from a personal agent, an impersonal principle, or natural laws?)
5. **Morality:** What is the basis of morality? (Is it rooted in divine command, universal law, social consensus, or reason?)
6. **Meaning:** What is the meaning of life? (Does it have inherent purpose, or must individuals create their own?)
7. **Eschatology:** What happens after death? (Is there continuity of self, reincarnation, or dissolution?)
8. **Soteriology:** What is the path to liberation or flourishing? (How do we overcome suffering or bondage?)

The Eight Small Qs (Quality of Life) : These questions focus on the practical architecture of flourishing at personal and collective levels.

Personal/Physical Quality of Life (PQL) : *Selected important questions regarding individual vitality and agency:*

1. **Physical Health:** Am I physically healthy enough to sustain my intentions?
2. **Energy Management:** How do I manage my body, habits, and rhythms so that my days unfold as I wish?
3. **Emotional Coherence:** How do I understand, regulate, and express emotions without fragmentation?
4. **Purpose:** What motivates my actions when no one is watching?

Social/Spiritual Quality of Life (SQL) : *Selected important questions regarding collective coherence and transcendence:*

1. **Civic Dignity:** How do we ensure fairness and dignity in our shared systems of living?
2. **Ecological Sustainability:** How do we sustain the biosphere that sustains us?
3. **Governance:** How do we structure authority so that it serves rather than dominates?
4. **Spiritual Community:** How do communities cultivate compassion and shared sacredness

