

WORLD VIEWS AND YOU

I. Introduction

- A. Today more than any time in history worldviews are in collision. Ideas do have consequences! Today there is no longer a worldview consensus in our country. The conflict and the polarization (see the abortion issue as an example) and political gridlock we see are the result of the demise of the Christian consensus which once undergirded our society. Currently, our society is multi-cultural, or pluralistic, and there is no strong worldview consensus.
- B. Modern man is faced with a supermarket of worldviews all claiming to represent reality. This is due to several factors, among them are: increased immigration, the loss of Christianity's sense of mission in the world, and through modern travel and communication. Result: we are exposed to many different cultures with their subsequent worldviews..

II. Definition of a Worldview

- A. A worldview is a philosophy of life. An ideology. A *weltanschauung* (for you Germans!). It is an attempt to explain life's most basic questions. A religion is likewise, a worldview. Any distinct culture is the embodiment of a worldview.
- B. Definition: "It is a *system* of beliefs; it is what we really believe about the world (universe) and ourselves and how we fit into the scheme of things, and it is these beliefs which influence our thought and action.
- C. Illustrations
 - 1. A worldview can be likened to a pair of glasses through which one views the world. It is important to have the right prescription or one will have a distorted view of reality!
 - 2. Think of a worldview as the picture (the boxtop) that goes along with a jigsaw puzzle. The pieces of the puzzle are life as you find it. A worldview helps you arrange the pieces in some meaningful order.
 - 3. Everyone has a worldview (even TV commentators and journalists!). A person may not be adept at articulating or defending their worldview. They may not even be able to explain how they received it.

4. Individuals may be at different stages in the process of defining and defending their worldview. In this process, we are influenced by many different forces. Why do people hold one worldview rather than another, we may ask? Usually a person's worldview is the result of the following forces:
 - a. Culture and tradition: generally that in which a person is born.
 - b. Feelings, some emotional attraction, or that which is apart from reason. Perhaps a mystical experience.
 - c. Empirical data. Facts that you experience or witness. For example, the Apostles who witnessed the resurrection. Worldviews *are* shaped by experience.
 - d. Reason or logic. Unfortunately not much of this is involved in the shaping of a worldview! But some is.
 - e. Peer pressure. This would likely be in conjunction with the culture and tradition. Is a Muslim free to believe otherwise? Why not?
 - f. Revelation. Information from a transcendent source such as God or an authoritative source.

III. The Purpose of a Worldview

A. It Provides a sense of Peace

1. In the sense that you know who you are and what your place is in the universe.
2. Your worldview should be such that it leaves no great areas of your experience that cause tension.
3. A world view should bring peace when it adequately explains the world as it is.

Mark Twain once said: From the cradle to his grave, a man never does a single thing which has any first and foremost object save one--to secure peace of mind--spiritual comfort for himself.

B. It Provides Perspective

Our world view gives us a basis, or a perspective, from which we can analyze, categorize, and synthesize data enabling us to make sense of our existence. It helps us integrate the facts into a meaningful whole. In a practical sense it's our basis for making life's decisions.

IV. Characteristics of an Adequate World View

A. It is Coherent. (Coherency)

1. The pieces of the puzzle have no meaning in themselves.
2. They only find their meaning in the whole.
3. The main sense of a painting cannot be gained by only looking up close. When you step back and view it from a distance one gains a sense of the overall meaning.

B. It corresponds to the way things really are. (Correspondence)

Your world view must correspond to the way things really are. A psychotic must generally be institutionalized because his view of life is so far removed from reality (the way life really is).

C. It is always consistent. (Consistency)

It is devoid of internal contradictions. In other words, it adheres to the laws of logic.

D. It can potentially explain all of reality. (Comprehensiveness)

1. No corner of reality is ignored.
2. A world view must be capable of handling and explaining new data. *No my mind is made up don't confuse me with the facts!* It is sometimes helpful to ask yourself (concerning your own worldview) *What would falsify my worldview?* It is also a good question to ask those of a non-christian worldview. Incidentally, what fact would falsify Christianity? See I Cor. 15:12ff.

3. It has few *ad hoc* explanations. A classic example of *ad hoc* explanations is when it is revealed to a woman that her husband is having an affair. Rather than face the problem head-on, her continual response to evidence is explanations that preserve his integrity. *Oh! He was just counselling with her, etc.*

Note: The above characteristics are also what you would use to test a worldview. Try it with a false cult.

V. Consequences of a Faulty Worldview

- A. Many unanswered questions and a lack of meaning. For example, if a scientific theory fails to have explanatory value it is useless. So is a worldview.
- B. Physical consequences. A worldview declares the law of gravity an illusion, but if an adherent of such a view jumps over a cliff there will be consequences! See for example, the Christian Science cult which says sickness is an illusion.
- C. A false hope. Nothing could be sadder than someone who has hope for life after death based on false premises. *If I go to church regularly I'll go to heaven.*

VI. The Four Universals of Worldview Building

Universals are those things that are universally true; they are self-evident; there are no exceptions.

- A. Something exists and its effects are the same for all men. All men observe and experience cause and effect. The universe is therefore rational; it is predictable.
- B. All people absolutize. The finite always seeks an infinite reference point or the finite has no meaning. For some it is God (various forms of theism); for others, this reference point (final authority is man (forms of humanism). All worldviews are either forms of theism or forms of humanism.
- C. No statement can be both true and false at the same time. This is a primary law of logic known as the law of non-contradiction. All communication is based on this principle. The philosopher, Hegel, tried to deny this universal

but had to employ the law to state his case! Because of this universal, ideally speaking, only one worldview can correctly mirror reality. For example, communism and Hinduism both make divergent claims about the nature of reality. One or the other may be correct, or neither are correct. However, they both cannot be correct at the same time or the universe is an absurd place! There are not many paths to the top of the mountain! Karl Marx said: "Either God is sovereign, or man is sovereign. One of the two must be untrue." Here for once the hairy-one is correct!

- D. All people exercise faith. All presuppose certain things to be true without prior proof. These are presuppositions, inferences or assumptions, upon which a belief is based. Here are some common assumptions of current worldviews: a personal god exists, life began from inorganic matter, man is basically good, the Bible is true, reality is only material.

VII. The Major Questions answered by a Wordlview

- A. Who am I? What is man?
- B. Where did I come from? How did the universe come into existence?
Questions of origin and existence.
- C. What is truth? How can I know and know that I know?
- D. What is right action? Questions of ethics and morality.

VIII. Concluding remarks

The uniqueness of the Christian worldview is that it believes that the Creator of all the pieces of the puzzle has given (revealed) to man the Boxtop which gives them meaning.

For Further Study:

Brown, William E. & Phillips, W. Gary. *Making Sense of Your World*.

Clark, Gordon H. *A Christian View of Men and Things*.

Geisler, Norman L. & Watkins, William D. *Worlds Apart*.

Holmes, Arthur F. *Contours of a World View*.

Holmes, Arthur. *The Making of a Christian Mind*.

Nash, Ronald H. *World-Views in Conflict*.

Naugle, David K. *Worldview*.
Pepper, Stephen C. *World Hypotheses*.
Sire, James W. *Naming The Elephant*.
Sire, James W. *The Universe Next Door*.
Sproul, R.C. *Lifeviews*.