

## A CHRISTIAN VIEW OF WORLDVIEWS

Apologetics

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### 1. A CHRISTIAN VIEW OF WORLDVIEWS

...criticism possible upon a much *more deeply lying plane* than a supposed merely *theoretical one*<sup>1</sup>

"Genuine Christian philosophy requires a radical rejection of the supra-theoretical pre-suppositions and "axioms" of immanence- philosophy in all its forms. It has to seek its own philosophic paths, prescribed by its proper transcendental ground-Idea."

Would it not be possible that their *true starting point is hidden beneath supposedly scientific thesis*, and that scientific thought has deeper roots which must be discovered in order to establish contact between different schools of philosophic thought?<sup>2</sup>

The New Oxford American Dictionary defines the term "worldview" as 'a particular philosophy of life or conception of the world' ("worldview n."). According to the Dictionary of the Social Sciences, 'From the German Weltanschauung, worldview refers to the total system of values and beliefs that characterize a given culture or group' ("worldview"). The Cambridge Dictionary of Philosophy defines it as 'an overall perspective on life that sums up what we know about the world, how we evaluate it emotionally, and how we respond to it volitionally' (quoted in Gauch, this issue). Worldviews are characterized by their generality and their tendency to be comprehensive. They provide a framework for the way a person or a whole community makes sense of life and the world (understood to include the entire universe) in its most significant aspects and dimensions. Of course, what counts as significant also depends on the worldview we hold, but worldviews typically ask questions such as the following.

- (1) What sorts of things exist in the universe?
- (2) Is the universe created by an intelligent Being? If so, what are the Being's properties and if not, what account can be given of creation?
- (3) What is the structure of reality?
- (4) Do humans have a nature or essence?
- (5) How should we live our lives?
- (6) What is good and bad, right and wrong?
- (7) What is the best form of government?
- (8) Is there a purpose to life in general, or to the universe as a whole?
- (9) Is there life after death? Since one of the most important functions of worldviews is to make sense of life and the world, worldviews also ask:
- (10) How should we go about answering these questions?<sup>3</sup>

#### 1.1. WHY SHOULD WE BE INTERESTED IN WV?

- "It is widely acknowledged that *this is the age of the moral panic*. Newspaper headlines continually warn of some new danger resulting from moral laxity, and television programmes echo the theme with sensational documentaries."<sup>4</sup>

<sup>1</sup> DOOYEVEERD, H. *A New Critique of Theoretical Thought I*, p. vi [6]

<sup>2</sup> DOOYEVEERD, H. *Introduction to a Transcendental Criticism of Philosophic Thoughts*,

<sup>3</sup> MATTHEWS, M. R. (ed.) *Science, Worldviews and Education* p. 82-83 [89-90]

<sup>4</sup> THOMPSON, K. *Moral Panics*, p. i.

### 1.1.1. KEY WV-QUESTIONS

#### 1.1.1.1. MATTHEWS: SCIENCE, WORLDVIEW AND EDUCATION

- (1) What sorts of things exist in the universe?
- (2) Is the universe created by an intelligent Being? If so, what are the Being's properties and if not, what account can be given of creation?
- (3) What is the structure of reality?
- (4) Do humans have a nature or essence?
- (5) How should we live our lives?
- (6) What is good and bad, right and wrong?
- (7) What is the best form of government?
- (8) Is there a purpose to life in general, or to the universe as a whole?
- (9) Is there life after death? Since one of the most important functions of worldviews is to make sense of life and the world, worldviews also ask:
- (10) How should we go about answering these questions?

#### 1.1.1.2. JAMES SIRE: SEVEN QUESTIONS

- 1. What is prime reality—the really real?
- 2. What is the nature of external reality, that is, the world around us?
- 3. What is a human being?
- 4. What happens to a person at death?
- 5. Why is it possible to know anything at all?
- 6. How do we know what is right and wrong?
- 7. What is the meaning of human history?

#### 1.1.1.3. CHUCK COLSON: FOUR QUESTIONS

- 1. Where Did I Come From?
- 2. What's Wrong with the World?
- 3. Is There a Solution?
- 4. What is My Purpose?

### 1.1.2. THE BIBLE SAYS...

- always be ready to give a defense to anyone who asks you for a reason for the hope that is in you (1Pt 3:15)
- But the Spirit explicitly says that in later times some will fall away from the faith, paying attention to deceitful spirits and doctrines of demons (1Ti 4:1)
- be able to extinguish all the flaming arrows of the evil one. (Eph 6:16)

## 1.2. PHILOSOPHY & WORLDVIEW

- φιλοσοφία "love for wisdom"

### 1.2.1. THE ORIGIN OF THE WORD "WV"

- [Humboldt]...worldview, is considerably more complicated. *The term itself is attributed to Wilhelm von Humboldt (1767–1835)*, the German politician and philologist. It has been adopted by numerous linguists, however, and has become associated within specialist circles with what is known as the Sapir-Whorf hypothesis which posits that thought is language-dependant. In non-specialist circles, *worldview has come to denote the perspective of a culture.*<sup>5</sup>
- The German word *Weltanschauung*, *first coined by Kant*, became a key word in the thought-world of German Idealism and Romanticism.<sup>6</sup>

Kant and Hegel both use the term *Weltanschauung* (worldview) to indicate comprehensive perspectives such as we associate with religious traditions. The term was sometimes used interchangeably with *Zeitgeist* (spirit of the age) to indicate the general cultural climate of a place and time. Wilhelm von Humboldt used the term to indicate the comprehensive lifeworld and approach to reality shared by a linguistic community or nation.

<sup>5</sup> UNDERHILL, J. W. *Humboldt Worldview and Language*, Edinburgh : Edinburgh University Press, 2009, p. x.

<sup>6</sup> WOLTERS, A. *On The Idea of Worldview and Its Relation to Philosophy*, (view.edu\\_data\view\file\m2\\_6)

The term was in popular usage when Jaspers published his work – 1919 – Heidegger delivered his first lectures at the University of Freiburg the same year with the title “The Idea of Philosophy and the Problem of Worldview”<sup>7</sup>

### 1.2.2. TRANSLATING "WV" INTO ENGLISH

As DR. JAMES ORR (in his valuable lectures on the Christian view of God and the world, Edinb. 1897 p. 3) observes, the German technical term *Weltanschauung* has no precise equivalent in English. He therefore used the literal translation *view of the world*, notwithstanding this phrase in English is limited by associations, which connect it predominately with physical nature. For this reason the phrase *view of the world* seems to be preferable. My American friends however told me that the shorter phrase *life system*, on the other side of the ocean, is often used in the same sense. So lecturing before an American public, I took the shorter phrase, at least in the title of my first lecture, the shortest expression always having some preference for what is to be the general indication of your subject-matter. In my lectures on the contrary, I interchanged alternately both phrases, of *life-system* and *life and world view* in accordance with the special meaning predominating in my argumentation. See also DR. ORR'S note on page 365.<sup>8</sup>

### 1.2.3. WORLDVIEW DEFINITIONS

#### 1.2.3.1. "STRONG" DEFINITIONS

- [Intercultural Aesthetics] According to Leo Apostel, one of Belgium's most prolific philosophers in the twentieth century, *'A worldview is a coherent set of bodies of knowledge concerning all aspects of the world. This coherent set allows people to construct a global image of the world and to understand as many elements of their experiences as possible. A worldview can in fact be perceived of as a map that people use to orient and explain, and from which they evaluate and act, and put forward prognoses and visions of the future'*.

#### 1.2.3.2. "WEAK" DEFINITIONS

- *'Weltanschauungen are not produced by thinking'*<sup>9</sup>
- "If, on the other hand, we define *Weltanschauung* as something a-theoretical with *philosophy merely as one of its manifestations*, and not the only one, we can widen our field of cultural studies in a twofold way. For one thing, *our search for a synthesis will then be in a position to encompass every single cultural field*. The plastic arts, music, costumes, mores and customs, rituals, the tempo of living, expressive gestures and demeanor — all these no less than theoretical communications will become a decipherable language, adumbrating the underlying unitary whole of *Weltanschauung*."<sup>10</sup>
- [Worldviews and Cultures] "For us, *a worldview reflects what generations of people have experienced, prior to any conceptual notions*. These pre-conscious "experiences" have been and *continue to be translated into comprehensible orderings* which *subconsciously explain how the world ontologically is*, becomes, or is experienced. An example of these core beliefs in Western culture is the idea of the substantiality of each being. From these core beliefs, interpretations are deduced on a semi-conscious level, such as the autonomy of people. Both the notion of substantiality and autonomy manifest themselves culturally in language, in institutional structures, in daily habits and cultural traditions, in rules and norms."<sup>11</sup>
- "A shorthand term signifying the *common body of beliefs* shared by a group of speakers about the world and their relationship to it. There is a close interrelationship between this notion and that of 'language game' (see meaning), discourse or paradigm."<sup>12</sup>

<sup>7</sup> GOLDMAN, S. *The Psychology of Worldviews - Jaspers/Heidegger*, p. 6 (<http://episjournal.com/?p=175>)

<sup>8</sup> KUYPER, A. *Calvinism*, p. 4.

<sup>9</sup> DILTHEY, W. *Die Typen der Weltanschauung und ihre Ausbildung in den metaphysischen Systemen*, *Gesammelte Schriften VIII*, p. 86, (MANNHEIM, K. *Essays on the Sociology of Knowledge*, p. 38 [52])

<sup>10</sup> MANNHEIM, K. *Essays on the Sociology of Knowledge*, p. 38 [52]

<sup>11</sup> NOTE, N. - FORNET-BETANCOURT, R. - ESTERMANN, J. - AERTS, D. (ed.) *Worldviews and Cultures*, Brussels : Springer, 2009, p. 1.

<sup>12</sup> EDGAR - SEDGWICK *Cultural Theory - the Key Concepts*, p. 378

- [C.S.LEWIS] For what you see and hear depends a good deal on where you are standing: it also depends on what sort of person you are.<sup>13</sup>
- [Maya] People see and interact with the world based on their *knowledge, ideas, and beliefs*—their worldview. *A worldview translates the world into an understandable model that explains why things are as they are*, what is true and what is false, *what one should do or not do*, and how things can be achieved. It also includes ideas and beliefs about the world's origin and future and influences how one interacts and communicates with others and with one's surroundings. Worldviews may be adapted when knowledge, ideas, and beliefs change, but generally they are deep-rooted in the human mind.<sup>14</sup>

#### 1.2.4. PHILOSOPHY

- "As the science of *a creed of life* philosophy has to meet two needs. Men expect of it a comprehensive, securely based, and, as far as possible, complete structure of all knowledge, and at the same time a definite conviction which will prove a support in life." (Als *Wissenschaft der Weltanschauung* hat die Philosophie zwei Bedürfnisse zu befriedigen. Man erwartet von ihr einen umfassenden, sicher gegründeten und womöglich abschließenden Ausbau aller Erkenntnis und daneben eine auf solcher Einsicht errichtete Ueberzeugung, die den inneren Halt im Leben zu gewähren vermag.)<sup>15</sup>
- Weltweisheit und Lebensweisheit zugleich

### 1.3. STRONG AND WEAK DEFINITION

#### 1.3.1. WORLDVIEW AS PHILOSOPHY

*The meaning of the term "world-view" and its significance in life.* At first glance the term "world-view" suggests a general view of the world—and no more. But the appearance of the word does not reveal the full meaning of this complex intellectual phenomenon. A world-view, as we understand it, is a system of generalised views of the surrounding world and man's place in it, of man's relationship to the world and himself, and also the basic positions that people derive from this general picture of the world, their beliefs, socio-political, moral and aesthetic ideals, the principles by which they know and appraise material and spiritual events.<sup>16</sup>

#### 1.3.2. WORLDVIEW AS OPINION

A world-view is thus essentially an individual accomplishment, a sort of personal religious faith; but it is distinguished from traditional faith, that of revealed religion, through the fact that it makes no claim to an unconditioned truth binding for all men and communicable to all men: just as scientific truth about the absolute is not possible, so it is impossible to establish a world-view truth which is totally valid for each human being.<sup>17</sup>

### 1.4. FAITH-BASED WORLDVIEW

#### 1.4.1. "SCIENTIFIC" WORLDVIEW DEVELOPMENT

#### 1.4.2. BIBLICAL WORLDVIEW

<sup>13</sup> LEWIS, C. S. *The Magician's Nephew*, p. 125

<sup>14</sup> CECIL, L. *Maya worldviews at conquest*. Boulder : University Press of Colorado, 2009, p. xiii.

<sup>15</sup> WINDELBAND, W. *An Introduction to Philosophy*, p. 27 (Einleitung in die Philosophie, p. 19)

<sup>16</sup> SPIRKIN, A. *Dialectical Materialism*, p. 15.

<sup>17</sup> HUSSERL. E. *Crisis of European Sciences*, p. 390.

## 2. PERSPECTIVE-BASED WORLDVIEWS

### 2.1. MORE DEFINITIONS

[NOEBEL]“The term *worldview* refers to any *ideology, philosophy, theology, movement, or religion* that provides an overarching approach to understanding God and the world.”<sup>18</sup>

[SIRE]“A worldview is a commitment, a fundamental orientation of the heart, that can be expressed as a story or in a set of presuppositions (assumptions which may be true, partially true or entirely false) which we hold (consciously or unconsciously, consistently or inconsistently) about the basic constitution of reality, and that provides the foundation on which we live and move and have our being.”<sup>19</sup>

### 2.2. THE PROBLEM OF EVANGELICAL CHRISTIANS

- [SCHAEFFER]“The battle we are in rages most intensely in the academic world. Every academic discipline has dominated secularist thinking - especially in the behavioral sciences, the humanities, and the arts. Part of our task as Christians is to carefully understand and study these areas - but then to respond critically from a distinctively Christian point of view.”<sup>20</sup>
- [SCHAEFFER]“It is very difficult to live in this world as a college or university student for four years or longer and *not become infiltrated by the surrounding world view.*”<sup>21</sup>

### 2.3. INFLATION OF SINGULARITY

- Monism: Environmental debates promoted by ‘deep ecologists’ contrast ‘biocentric’ (or ‘ecocentric’) with ‘anthropocentric’ cosmologies. A biocentric approach denies the distinct and superior moral status of humanity which the anthropocentric philosophy takes for granted. Biocentrists believe in the intrinsic value of nature; but since the notion of value is itself anthropocentric they inevitably end up humanizing the non-human world.<sup>22</sup>
- monistic tendencies

### 2.4. PERSPECTIVES

There is only a seeing from a perspective, only a "knowing" from a perspective, and the more emotions we express over a thing, the more eyes, different eyes, we train on the same thing, the more complete will be our "idea" of that thing, our "objectivity.”<sup>23</sup>

### 2.5. FOUR MODERN WORLDVIEW-PERSPECTIVES

- perspectives = attitudes; "eye glasses"; *Zeitgeist*;

#### 2.5.1. NATURALISM

- the belief that the universe is all one, in the sense that all objects in it and all aspects of it are equally accessible to study by scientific method [i.e. to the senses]<sup>24</sup>
- ... a world-view that rejects the supernatural and spiritual and explains the world in terms of natural influences and forces, and cause and effect; any religious or moral system based on this; the belief that natural religion is of itself sufficient; deism; any action based on natural desires and instincts.<sup>25</sup>
- empiricism - observation - experience (ELIPHAZ) -
- naturalism as a philosophy based upon the findings and methods of the sciences
- ...primarily the writings of Charles Darwin... assumptions of divine intervention and guidance are laid to rest...

<sup>18</sup> NOEBEL, D. A. *Understanding the Times*, Eugene : Harvest House Publishers, 1991, p. 8.

<sup>19</sup> SIRE, J. W. *The Universe Next Door*, Downers Grove : Inter Varsity Press, 2004, p. 17.

<sup>20</sup> SCHAEFFER, F. *The Great Evangelical Disaster*. In: *Works IV*, p. 385.

<sup>21</sup> SCHAEFFER, F. *The Great Evangelical Disaster*. In: *Works IV*, p. 385.

<sup>22</sup> BARNARD - SPENCER *Encyclopedia of Social and Cultural Anthropology*, p. 286

<sup>23</sup> NIETZSCHE, F. *The Genealogy of Morals*, p. 124.

<sup>24</sup> LACEY, A.R. p. 223.

<sup>25</sup> *The Chambers Dictionary*,

"...Farber advocated a pervasive naturalism that not only rejected all forms of spiritualism and supernaturalism, but also removed humankind from any special position in the flux of cosmic reality."<sup>26</sup>

- all is nature
- atheism

### 2.5.2. SCIENTISM

- the view that philosophical problems require none but scientific techniques for answering them.<sup>27</sup>

**scientism** n ... a belief that the *methods* used in studying natural sciences should be employed also in investigating all aspects of *human behaviour and condition*, eg in philosophy and social sciences; scientific or pseudo-scientific language.<sup>28</sup>

- control
- progressivism

"It refers to knowledge or understanding of truths in the light of principles or causes. *Scientia* is systematic knowledge of truths, truths "deducible" from principles. It is not simply knowledge *that*, but knowledge-*why*, and not simply knowledge-why, but knowledge-why that *unifies whole classes of truths known*. Again, *scientia* is not merely knowledge why truths *happen* to be true. Instead, it is knowledge that the relevant truths cannot *but* be true given the relevant causes or principles. So it is knowledge of truths within a framework that makes their truth look necessitated by the underlying principles."<sup>29</sup>

### 2.5.3. ANTHROPOCENTRISM

- caution! Anthropocentrism in ecology may be important!

- Centring in man; regarding man as the central fact of the universe, to which all surrounding facts have reference.<sup>30</sup>

- *anthropocentric* (Gr kentron centre) regarding the human race as the center of, or central to, the universe.<sup>31</sup>

- egocentrism; selfism; therapeutic culture;

#### 2.5.3.1. INDIVIDUALISTIC

- existentialism
- relativism
- 

##### 2.5.3.1.1.

- ego - Feuerbach;
- "Nothing is more to me than myself!"<sup>32</sup>

##### 2.5.3.1.2. PSYCHOLOGISM

- "Psychologism, then, is not an ontological thesis. It is an epistemological thesis, which *traces back all epistemological questions to some aspects of psychology*. It need not have to hold, however, that everything is nothing but mental representations."<sup>33</sup>
- "...psychology shall once more be recognized as the queen of the sciences, for whose service and equipment the other sciences exist. For psychology is once more the path to the fundamental problems."<sup>34</sup>

#### 2.5.3.2. SOCIOLOGICAL

- Marxism; anthropology;

<sup>26</sup> BIRX (ed.) *Encyclopedia of Time*, p. 507.

<sup>27</sup> LACEY, A.R. p. 308.

<sup>28</sup> *The Chambers Dictionary*

<sup>29</sup> SORELL - ROGERS - KRAYE *Scientia in Early Modern Philosophy* p. vii [7]

<sup>30</sup> *Oxford English Dictionary*,

<sup>31</sup> *Chambers Dictionary*

<sup>32</sup> STIRNER, M. *Ego and His Own*, p. 6.

<sup>33</sup> NOTTURNO, M. (ed.) *Perspectives on Psychologism*, p. 2 [3]

<sup>34</sup> NIETZSCHE, F. *Beyond Good and Evil* 23.

- Plausibility: "As a quality of an argument, statement, or the like: *Seeming worthiness of acceptance*; appearance of reasonableness; speciousness."<sup>35</sup>
- cultural studies (postmodern)
- "Culture is therefore used to refer to individual style or character, to a stage of artistic or intellectual development, to the expressive life and traditions of a social group, to a social-historical moment or a broad epoch. We talk about a cultured left foot, about the culture of football, about film culture, African-American or Scottish culture, eighteenth-century or mod culture, or the culture of the 1960s or 1980s."<sup>36</sup>

#### 2.5.3.2.1. CULTURE

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### 2.5.4. SPIRITUALISM (IDEALISM)

- |   |
|---|
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <i>spiritualism</i> n the philosophical doctrine that nothing is real but soul or spirit<sup>37</sup></li> <li>• - the doctrine that spirit has a real existence apart from matter;</li> <li>• - the interpretation of a varied series of abnormal phenomena as for the most part caused by spiritual beings acting upon specially sensitive persons or mediums (also spiritism).</li> <li>• "mind over matter"</li> </ul> |
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#### 2.5.4.1. NEW AGE MVMT

- "The old opposition between *naturalism and supernaturalism*, or between *materialism and spiritualism*, has been superseded by a conflict between *naturalism* as a philosophy based upon the findings and methods of the sciences, and *subjectivism* as a general tendency, with its principle of *the primacy of the experiencing being*."<sup>38</sup>

#### 2.5.4.2.

### 2.6. INTERSECTIONS

#### (1) Naturalism (matter, )

- 1.1 Naturalism
- 2.1 Naturalism×Spiritualism ( )
- 3.1 Naturalism×Spiritualism×Anthropocentrism
- 4.1 Naturalism× Anthropocentrism

#### (2) Scientism (rules, laws, determinism)

- 1.3 Scientism
- 1.2 Scientism×Naturalism
- 2.2 Scientism×Naturalism×Spiritualism
- 3.2 **Scientism×Naturalism×Spiritualism×Anthropocentrism**
- 4.2 Scientism×Naturalism×Anthropocentrism
- 2.3 Scientism×Spiritualism
- 3.3 Scientism×Spiritualism×Anthropocentrism
- 4.3 Scientism×Anthropocentrism

#### (2.4) Spiritualism (the unseen, mind, freedom)

- 2.1 Spiritualism×Naturalism
- 2.2 Spiritualism×Naturalism×Scientism
- 2.3 Spiritualism×Scientism
- 2.4 Spiritualism
- 3.1 Spiritualism×Naturalism×Anthropocentrism
- 3.2 **Spiritualism×Naturalism×Scientism×Anthropocentrism**

<sup>35</sup> Oxford English Dictionary "plausibility"

<sup>36</sup> BROOKER, P. *A Glossary of Cultural Theory*, p. 59 [72].

<sup>37</sup> *The Chambers Dictionary*,

<sup>38</sup> FARBER, M. *Naturalism and Subjectivism*, p. 7.

- 3.3 Spiritualism×Scientism×Anthropocentrism
- 3.4 Spiritualism×Anthropocentrism

(4.4) **Anthropocentrism (individual, society, self)**

- 4.1 Anthropocentrism×Naturalism
- 4.2 Anthropocentrism×Naturalism×Scientism
- 4.3 Anthropocentrism×Scientism
- 4.4 Anthropocentrism In the Ethics of *Situationism* - ego-opportunism (Fletcher Situation Ethics i. 29 There are various names for this approach: *situationism*, *contextualism*, *occasionalism*, *circumstantialism*, even *actualism*.

**2.7. A CHRISTIAN WORLDVIEW**

**2.7.1. ASYMMETRICAL DUALISM**

**2.7.2. TRINITARIANISM**

**2.7.3. BIBLICISM**

**2.8. CHARTS**

**2.8.1. MCFARLAND**

This comparison of worldviews helps you know what you believe and why. A worldview is the "big picture" view of the world, one that attempts to answer all the big questions of life: What is real? If there is a God, what is God's nature? What is a human being? How can we know what is right or wrong?

This chart compares 8 worldviews:

1. Atheism - There is no God
2. Pantheism - God is all.
3. Pan-En-theism - God is in all
4. Deism - God is a distant creator
5. Finite God-ism - There is a God, but he is limited
6. Polytheism - There are many gods
7. Monotheism - There is only god
8. Biblical Christianity - There is only one Triune god

Questions compared:

1. Is there a God?
2. What is Real?
3. Where Did What's Real Come From?
4. What is a Human Being?
5. Are Humans Basically Good or Evil? How bad is the flaw?
6. Is it Possible to Know Anything at All?
7. How Do We Know What is Right and Wrong?
8. What is Truth?
9. What is Evil?
10. Where do laws come from?
11. What Happens After Death?
12. Can Miracles Happen?
13. What is the Meaning of Human History?
14. How Do We Get to Know God?

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**2.8.2. NOEBEL**

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### 2.8.3. *POSTMODERNISM*

- the discursively created subject (Foucault), the role of cultural influences in ordering society (Baudrillard) and the breakdown in transcendental meaning (Lyotard).<sup>39</sup>

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<sup>39</sup> ALLMENDINGER, P. *Planning in Postmodern Times*, p. VII.