

Week Three - Competing Worldviews: Viewing the World While At War with Reality

Review

First: That we would honor and rejoice in God as our Creator, Sustainer, Judge, Redeemer and in the Good News of His Kingdom

This primary goal will hopefully be the foundation throughout.

Second: That we would prioritize the Gospel in talking with others

Third: That we would consider how we come to our political positions

Last week we considered
Worldviews and their commitments

What is a Worldview?

“So what is a worldview? Essentially this: 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) that we hold (consciously or subconsciously, consistently or inconsistently) about the basic constitution of reality, and that provides the foundation on which we live and move and have our being.”

— James W. Sire, [The Universe Next Door: A Basic Worldview Catalog](#)

Worldview Commitments

What is prime reality - the really real?

God, or the gods, or the material cosmos. Our answer here is the most fundamental.

What is the nature of external reality (that is, the world around us)?

Created or autonomous, as chaotic or orderly, as matter or spirit; or whether we emphasize our subjective, personal relationship to the world or its objectivity apart from us.

What is a human being?

A highly complex machine, a sleeping god, a person made in the image of God, a naked ape, a meaningless clump of atoms and cells

What happens to a person at death?

Personal extinction, or transformation to a higher state, or reincarnation, or departure to a shadowy existence on "the other side."

Why is it possible to know anything at all?

We are made in the image of an all-knowing God who reveals, or that consciousness and rationality developed under the contingencies of survival in a long process of evolution.

How do we know what is right and wrong?

Made in the image of a God whose character is good; or right and wrong are determined by human choice alone or what feels good; or the notions simply developed under material evolution

What personal, life-orienting core commitments are consistent with this worldview?

Christians might say to fulfill the will of God, or to seek first the kingdom of God, or to obey God and enjoy him forever, or to be devoted to knowing God or loving God. Naturalists might say to realize their personal potential for experiencing life, or to do as much good as they can for others.

Our worldview is the foundation on which we live, think and value.

Our worldview drives all aspects of our lives.

Our values, our beliefs, our outlook.

Not just politics, but all areas of knowledge including biology, astronomy, economics, esthetics, ethics, law, psychology, philosophy, law, journalism, business....etc.

Christian Worldview: Viewing the World in Light of God's Self Revelation

This view validates reality and our lived experiences.

Outcome: We find that this is the only foundation for logic, science, beauty, and morality.

Impact: Joy and ultimate fulfillment.

Our identity in relationship to the Creator, Sustainer, Judge, and Redeemer and in the good News of His Kingdom.

Furthermore:

Christ is Lord.

He is Lord over all creatures.

Regardless of their acknowledgement of His Lordship

He is Lord over all that his creatures set out to do.

With all of our activities we are to acknowledge Him as God and the rightful authority in all areas of life. Private and public.

Today:

Competing worldviews

They are at war with reality and our lived experiences.

Outcome: chaos, complete subjectivity

Impact: meaninglessness and despair

Question:

1. What are the personal implications?
2. How have you seen this in the culture?
3. What are the political implications?
4. What ideas, attitudes or values are we unknowingly borrowing from these views?

“A fearless honesty should characterize both our self-analysis-where we are now-and our pursuit of truth.”

— James W. Sire, [The Universe Next Door: A Basic Worldview Catalog](#)

Worldviews in Historical Context

The Book of Acts

Now while Paul was waiting for them at Athens, his spirit was provoked within him as he saw that the city was full of idols. ...So Paul, standing in the midst of the Areopagus, said: “Men of Athens, I perceive that in every way you are very religious. For as I passed along and observed the objects of your worship, I found also an altar with this inscription: ‘To the unknown god.’

What therefore you worship as unknown, this I proclaim to you.

Acts 17:17

- The Athenians were Polytheists.
Polytheism is the belief in and worship of multiple deities or spirits. None of them being omnipotent, eternal or infinite. Varying levels of power.
- Paul preached to them about the God
- The Jews were Theists, all the surrounding nations were polytheists.

Colonial America Worldviews

- Nearly universal: Christian Theists.
- Christian influenced Deism and Unitarianism had wide influence.
- Unitarianism: Christian origins, denies Trinity and divinity of Christ.
- Shared view of God as creator and source for morality
- “The phrase 'Founding Fathers' is a proper noun. It refers to a specific group: the delegates to the Constitutional Convention. There were other important players not in attendance, but these fifty-five made up the core. Among the delegates were twenty-eight Episcopalians, eight Presbyterians, seven Congregationalists, two

Lutherans, two Dutch Reformed, two Methodists, two Roman Catholics, one unknown, and only three deists- Williamson, Wilson, and Franklin. This took place at a time when church membership usually entailed "sworn adherence to strict doctrinal creeds." This tally proves that 51 of 55 -a full 93 percent- of the members of the Constitutional Convention, the most influential group of men shaping the political underpinnings of our nation were Christians, not deists."

— Greg Koukl, [Tactics: A Game Plan for Discussing Your Christian Convictions](#)

Current American Worldview Jumble

- Christian Theism: God revealed Himself through Jesus Christ and the Bible.
Man: In His Image, The Fall, Redemption, Eternity with or apart from God
- Deism: God as a distant, non-intervening creator, leaving the universe to natural laws.
Man: Abandoned by God.
- Naturalism/Secularism: Emphasis on natural explanations and rejection of supernatural elements in understanding reality
Man: Alone without God
- Nihilism: Belief in life's lack of inherent meaning, values, or purpose.
Man: Alone without God and driven to meaninglessness
- Existentialism: Emphasizes individual freedom, choice, and responsibility in creating one's own meaning.
Man: Alone without God and driven to meaninglessness, but pressing on as if there were meaning
- Pantheism: God is impersonal and identical to the universe; all is divine and interconnected.
Man: Is God, and so is everything in the Universe
- New Age Spiritualism: Eclectic, spiritual beliefs often combining elements from various traditions yet not adhering to any specific tradition
- Postmodernism: Skepticism towards universal truths, emphasizing subjective experience and cultural context.

Competing Worldviews

Deism: God is Removed, Uninterested, Non-intervening

Man: Abandoned by God

- **Commitments**
 - Prime Reality

A transcendent God, as a First Cause, created the universe but then left it to run on its own. God is thus not immanent, not triune, not fully personal, not sovereign over human affairs, not providential.

- External Reality
The cosmos God created is determined, because it is created as a uniformity of cause and effect in a closed system; no miracle is possible.

- Human Beings
Human beings, though personal, are a part of the clockwork of the universe.
- Death
Human beings may or may not have a life beyond their physical existence.
- Morality
Morality is intuitive or limited to general revelation; because the universe is normal, it reveals what is right.
- Core Commitments
Cold deists use their own autonomous reason to determine their goal in life; warm deists may reflect on their commitment to a somewhat personal God and determine their goal in accordance with what they believe their God would be pleased with.
- **Current Forms**
 - Moralistic Therapeutic Deism
 - In its more Christian influenced versions, God clearly is personal and even friendly. University of North Carolina sociologists Christian Smith and Melinda Lundquist Denton in 2005 published a massive study of the religious beliefs of teenagers. Their conclusion was that most of these teenagers adhered to what they called moralistic therapeutic deism. They summed up this worldview as follows.
 - A God exists who created and orders the world and watches over human life on earth.
 - God wants people to be good, nice, and fair to each other, as taught in the Bible and by most religions.
 - The central goal of life is to be happy and to feel good about oneself.
 - God does not need to be particularly involved in one's life except when God is needed to resolve a problem.
 - Good people go to heaven when they die. God, ultimate reality, in this view makes no demand on his creation to be holy, righteous, or even very good. "As one seventeen-year-old conservative Protestant girl from Florida told us [the researchers], 'God's all around you, all the time. He believes in forgiving people and whatnot and he's there to guide us, for somebody to talk to and help us through our problems. Of course, he doesn't talk back.'" When asked what God is like, a Bryn Mawr College student drew a big smiley face and wrote, "He's one big smiley face. Big hands... big hands." This form of deism is certainly not limited to youth; it is, I suspect, very much like that of their parents and adult neighbors.
 - Deism is Unstable
 - Since there is no ultimate authority
 - Autonomous human reason replaced the Bible and tradition as the authority for the way ultimate reality was understood. Everyone could decide for themselves what God was like. Once the concept of God was up for grabs, there was no stopping his being reduced

from the complex Christian theistic idea of God to a minimal, simple force or abstract intelligence.

- Autonomous human reason replaced the Bible and tradition as the authority for morality.
- Deists rejected the biblical notion of the fall and assumed that the present universe is in its normal, created state.
- For what can be known about God is plain to them, because God has shown it to them. For his invisible attributes, namely, his eternal power and divine nature, have been clearly perceived, ever since the creation of the world, in the things that have been made. So they are without excuse. For although they knew God, they did not honor him as God or give thanks to him, but they became futile in their thinking, and their foolish hearts were darkened.

Romans 1:19-21

- Implications

Naturalism: There is no God

Man: Man without God - Identity From Chaos and Unto Chaos -

There is a progression both historically and theologically from Christian Theism to Deism and on to Naturalism. The route is this: In theism God is the infinite-personal Creator and sustainer of the cosmos. In deism God is reduced; he begins to lose his personality, though he remains Creator and (by implication) sustainer of the cosmos. In naturalism God is further reduced; he loses his very existence.

- **Commitments**

- **Prime reality**

Prime reality is matter. Matter exists eternally and is all there is. God does not exist.

- **External Reality**

The cosmos exists as a uniformity of cause and effect in a closed system.

- **Human beings**

Human beings are complex "machines"; personality is an interrelation of chemical and physical properties we do not yet fully understand.

- **Death**

Death is extinction of personality and individuality.

- **Knowledge**

Through our innate and autonomous human reason, including the methods of science, we can know the universe. The cosmos, including this world, is understood to be in its normal state.

- **Morality**

Morality is related only to human beings.

- **Core commitments**

Naturalism itself implies no particular core commitment on the part of any given naturalist.

Rather core commitments are adopted unwittingly or chosen by individuals.

- **Implications**

- "We thus end in an ironic paradox. Naturalism, born in the Age of Enlightenment, was launched on a firm acceptance of the human ability to know. Now naturalists

find that they can place no confidence in their knowing.”

James Sire

- “The fool says in his heart, “There is no God.” They are corrupt, they do abominable deeds; there is none who does good.”
- Psalm 14:1

Nihilism:

Belief in life's lack of inherent meaning, values, or purpose.

Man: Alone without God and driven to meaninglessness

NIHILISM IS MORE a feeling than a philosophy, more a solitary stance before the universe than a worldview. Strictly speaking, nihilism is a denial of any philosophy or worldview—a denial of the possibility of knowledge, a denial that anything is valuable.

— Greg Koukl, [Tactics: A Game Plan for Discussing Your Christian Convictions](#)

Existentialism

Dreaming beyond Nihilism in creating one's own meaning.

Man: Alone without God and driven to meaninglessness, but pressing on as if there were meaning

Pantheism

God is impersonal and identical to the universe; all is divine and interconnected.

Man: Is God, and so is everything in the Universe

- **Commitments**

- **Prime reality, External reality, Human beings**
 - The soul of each and every human being is the Soul of the cosmos (ultimate reality).
 - Many (if not all) roads lead to the One.
 - To realize one's oneness with the cosmos is to pass beyond personality.
- **Knowledge**

To realize one's oneness with the cosmos is to pass beyond knowledge. The principle of noncontradiction does not apply where ultimate reality is concerned.

- **Ethics**

To realize one's oneness with the cosmos is to pass beyond good and evil; the cosmos is perfect at every moment.

- **Death**

Death is the end of individual, personal existence, but it changes nothing essential in an individual's nature.

- **Core commitments**

Core commitments among individual Eastern pantheistic monists may vary widely, but one consistent commitment is, by the elimination of desire, to achieve salvation, that is, to realize one's union with the One (Hinduism) or the Void, pure consciousness (Buddhism).

- In the beginning, God created the heavens and the earth.
Genesis 1:1
- Star Wars: The force

New Age: Spirituality Without Religion

- **Commitments**

- **Prime Reality, External Reality, and Human beings**

Whatever the nature of being (idea or matter, energy or particle), the self is the kingpin, the prime reality. As human beings grow in their awareness and grasp of this fact, the human race is on the verge of a radical change in human nature; even now we see harbingers of transformed humanity and prototypes of the New Age.

- **External Reality**

The cosmos, while unified in the self, is manifested in two more dimensions: the visible universe, accessible through ordinary consciousness, and the invisible universe (or Mind at Large), accessible through altered states of consciousness.

- **Knowledge and Ethics**

The core experience of the New Age is cosmic consciousness, in which ordinary categories of space, time, and morality tend to disappear.

- **Death**

Physical death is not the end of the self; under the experience of cosmic consciousness, the fear of death is removed.

- **Prime Reality and External reality**

Three distinct attitudes are taken to the metaphysical question of the nature of reality under the general framework of the New Age: (1) the occult version, in which the beings and things perceived in states of altered consciousness exist apart from the self that is conscious, (2) the psychedelic version, in which these things and beings are projections of the conscious self, and (3) the conceptual relativist version, in which the cosmic consciousness is the conscious activity of a mind using one of many nonordinary models for reality, none of which is any "truer" than any other.

- **Knowledge**

Human beings can understand reality because in a state of God-consciousness they directly perceive it. Nonetheless, when New Age teachers present this view to others, they often cite the authority of ancient scriptures and other religious teachers.

- **Core commitments**

New Agers are committed to realizing their own individual unity with the cosmos, creating and re-creating it in their own image.

Postmodernism All Imagined & Unfounded -

- **Commitments**

- **A Worldview Question About Worldview Questions**

The first question postmodernism addresses is not what is there or how we know what is there but how language functions to construct meaning. In other words, there has been a shift in "first things" from being to knowing to constructing meaning.

- **Knowledge**

The truth about the reality itself is forever hidden from us. All we can do is tell stories.

- **Knowledge and Ethics**

All narratives mask a play for power. Any one narrative used as a metanarrative is oppressive.

- **Human beings**

There is no substantial self. Human beings make themselves who they are by the languages they construct about themselves.

- **Morality**

Morality, like knowledge, is a linguistic construct. Social good is whatever society takes it to be.

- **History and Core commitments**

Postmodernism is in flux, as is postmodernism's take on the significance of human history, including its own history. This means that the core commitments of many postmodernists are in flux as well. Postmodernists, in short, are committed to an endless stream of shifting "whatevers."

- **Not Truth, But Narrative as Power**

In a piece about the crisis of public confidence in the news, media stated, the root ideology of the New York Times, editorial staff springs from the view that

“ There is no such thing as objective truth. There is only narrative. Therefore, whoever controls the narrative has the whip hand.”

James Bennet, Former NYT General Editor

The Economist

what matters is not truth and ideals in themselves but the power to determine both in the public mind

- **Morality is all Opinion**

“The only consistent response for a relativist is, "Pushing morality is wrong for me, but that's just my personal opinion, and has nothing to do with you. Please ignore me.”

— Gregory Koukl, [Tactics: A Game Plan for Discussing Your Christian Convictions](#)

Our Response

Question: Common threads amongst these worldviews?

The Pathway Back to Reason, Morality and Meaning

An unbelieving mind destroys the grounds for knowledge, logic, meaning.

The pathway back to knowledge, logic, and meaning is not simply an intellectual issue, it is a moral issue. The pathway is faith and repentance.

“The times of ignorance God overlooked, but now he commands all people everywhere to repent, because he has fixed a day on which he will judge the world in righteousness by a man whom he has appointed; and of this he has given assurance to all by raising him from the dead.”
Acts 17:30-31

Three things with this brief survey.

Our personal confidence and faith

Apologetics and evangelism

“Whenever someone tries to deny the truth, ultimately, reality betrays him.”
— Greg Koukl, [Tactics: A Game Plan for Discussing Your Christian Convictions](#)

“In a very real sense, every person who denies God is living on borrowed capital. He enjoys living as if the world is filled with morality, meaning, order and beauty, yet he denies the God whose existence makes such things possible.

When you start with theism - "in the beginning God"- these destinations make complete sense. When you start with materialism though - "in the beginning, the particles" - that route takes you over a cliff of absurdity and despair.”

— Gregory Koukl, [Tactics: A Game Plan for Discussing Your Christian Convictions](#)

Now here is my own more modest goal. I want to put a stone in his shoe. All I want to do is give him something worth thinking about. I want him to hobble away on a nugget of truth that annoys him in a good way, something he can't simply ignore because it continues to poke at him.

— Gregory Koukl, [Tactics: A Game Plan for Discussing Your Christian Convictions](#)

The impacts of worldview on society and our politics

Resources

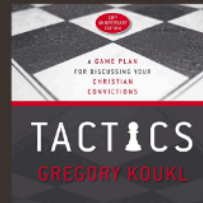
The Universe Next Door: A Basic Worldview Catalog

By James Sire



Tactics

By Greg Koukl



Resources

How to Have a Conversation

Greg Koukl

What Would You Say - YouTube Channel

