

War of the Worldviews

By Jay Rogers

The following are the major categories of the most widespread false worldviews which compete with Christianity. Virtually all worldviews, philosophies and religions can be placed under one of these headings: Christianity, Non-Christian Monotheism, Deism, Naturalism, Nihilism, Existentialism, Polytheism, Monism, Eastern Mysticism, or New Age philosophy.

Epistemology is the study of human belief systems, the nature and limits of human knowledge, analysis of why we believe the way we do, and whether truth is attainable through human reason and knowledge. To become "epistemologically self-conscious" is to become aware of your belief system; to become more consistent in the implications of your beliefs; and to realize that your beliefs and ideas have consequences.

Every worldview begins with some "self-evident" truths, premises, presuppositions or "unprovable facts" that undergird the entire philosophy. Every argument, belief or philosophy is based on certain presuppositions, which in turn may be based on prior presuppositions. Ultimately, there is one or a few presuppositions -- unprovable premises or postulates -- that must exist as the prime reality from which reality is explained and understood. Man is a creature who must believe in order to know, and who must know in order to think and act. Belief in something without proof must always presuppose knowledge, thought and action.

Worldview: Questions and Answers*

The following are questions to be considered. These questions are inescapable. Throughout history, theologians and philosophers have grappled with these questions. They have proposed many answers, but all answers tend to fall into several broad categories. Your answers to these questions will determine what type of worldview you hold. By answering these questions, you will show yourself to be a Christian, a Monotheist, a Deist, a Naturalist, a Nihilist, an Existentialist, a Polytheist, a Monist, an Eastern Mystic, or New Age.

Questions

1. What is first cause? That is, who or what existed *first* among all things in the universe?
2. What is the nature of reality and the world we see around us?
3. What is man?
4. What is man's relationship to the first cause and the world we see around us?
5. What is the nature of man?
6. What happens to us after we die?
7. Is there a difference between right and wrong?
8. What is the meaning and purpose of history?

Answers

Here I have given the answers that correspond to a Christian worldview.

1. In the beginning was God. He created the universe out of nothing.

2. God created a universe that operates with order in compliance with unchanging natural laws.
3. God created man in His own image.
4. God communicates with man through His Word, which is infallible.
5. Though man was created in the image of God, he fell into sin. Now God is redeeming certain men and women through the work of Jesus Christ.
6. At death, those who are redeemed by Jesus Christ enter into eternal life or heaven. Those who remain in sin enter into eternal separation from God or hell.
7. Ethics is a system of moral laws based on the character of God who is holy and loving.
8. History proceeds in a linear manner. God has sovereignly ordered the major events of history to lead mankind into God's ultimate destiny.

Christianity is the only epistemologically consistent worldview. That is, its presuppositions are consistent with its conclusions. In Christianity, there is a perfectly logical philosophy by which to explain and understand every area of human life.

I put the following worldviews in a specific order because it is possible to demonstrate that each worldview listed here naturally succeeds the prior one. As the "believer" becomes more epistemologically self-conscious (consistent with his own belief system), he sees the eternal contradictions in his false worldview. As he draws conclusions that disprove the premises of his worldview, he is forced to abandon it in favor of another worldview that is based on these new conclusions. He will hold that belief until he sees the inherent inconsistencies. And so on. The result is to be forever in a state of paradigm shift, to exchange one philosophy for another whenever the evidence seems to contradict the current model. The ultimate state of the worldly-wise philosopher is to believe a little bit of everything. Eventually, he will be forced to admit that consistency of belief is impossible, or he will repent of vain irrational thinking and humbly and rationally embrace a thoroughly Christian worldview.

The worldviews competing with Christianity offer only inconsistency. I will here define each competing worldview or philosophy, list the presuppositions of each and briefly explain why each is ultimately inconsistent with its own premises.

Monotheism -- Besides Christianity, Judaism and Islam are the world's two other monotheistic religions, teaching that there is one God. Judaism and Islam differ from Christianity in teaching that Jesus Christ was a great prophet or teacher, but not the Son of God. Both Jews and Muslims object strongly to the doctrine of the Trinity. Jews and Muslims accept the Old Testament as being the inspired Word of God. Muslims also accept the New Testament and the Koran (the writings of the prophet Mohammed) as inspired of God. The Christian, Jewish and Muslim worldviews are very similar, in terms of God, the creation of the world, man, the fall of man, ethics and history. The main inconsistency is what to think of the man Jesus Christ. For the Jew, His death on the cross is a stumbling block. The time and place of the promised Messiah's birth, many incidents of His life, and the manner and circumstances of His death were foretold by the Jews' own Old Testament Scriptures. For instance, the detailed descriptions found in Psalm 22; Isaiah 53; and Daniel 9, specifically point to the only person in history to fulfill the biblical prophecies about the Messiah -- Jesus Christ. The Jews do not recognize Him, even though He fulfilled these prophecies to the letter. For the Muslim, Jesus Christ is an enigma. He is revered as a "great prophet," a good man who nevertheless claimed to be God. According to Islam, such a claim must be blasphemous coming from a "mere man." Yet the Muslim ignores this inconsistency.

Deism -- This is simply a belief in a God, or a Supreme Being of some type. A Deist does not believe that Jesus Christ is God and does not accept the Bible as the Word of God. For a Deist, Truth is self-evident and discernible to the rational mind. Some religious philosophers during the time of the Renaissance, such as René Descartes, wanted to completely abolish the Greek philosophical worldview, which relied on presuppositions that were unprovable. Descartes proposed a universal picture of the world, based on human reasoning and mathematical proofs. Deism proposes a "clockwork universe" originally created by God or a Supreme Being, but left to run on its own according

to universal natural laws. Truth is understood through the existence of natural revelation, natural law and the "necessity of reason." Protestants of the Enlightenment era, including John Locke and David Hume, recognized that God and God's Truth were revealed in nature. They believed that the character of God could be understood through both natural law and biblical law. Locke and Hume argued that since man was created in God's image, man was able to grasp biblical truth through human reason. Deism took the argument a step further and proposed that natural revelation was the *only* standard and denied the necessity of the Bible altogether. Thus the *necessity* of reason gave way to the *sufficiency* of reason. Deism then became a broad term used to describe the group of Enlightenment era philosophers -- from Locke and Hume, who were orthodox in the central tenets of the Christian faith -- to François Voltaire and Thomas Paine, who were openly hostile to Christianity.

To a Deist, God is the transcendent First Cause who created the universe, but left a well-ordered world to run on its own. God is not immanent or personal; He is not providential or sovereign over human history. All events in the universe are determined by cause and effect, and not predetermined by God. There are no miracles. All historical events are a result of natural laws at work. Human beings, though creations of God, are intelligent, moral agents endowed with free will. Man himself must function as a cog in the "clockwork" universe; he cannot have a relationship with God. Man is basically good; not innately evil. The world is not fallen or abnormal; it is a perfect reflection of the nature and character of God. This point is an important departure from the Christian worldview. A Deist believes that knowledge about a perfect God can be derived from nature, which is also perfect. Since the material world is perfect, ethics, law and morality can be seen in nature. Christianity does not discount the revelation of nature in addition to biblical law, but since the world is fallen and imperfect, God gave man special revelation of Truth in the form of the written Word of God. Deism discounts special revelation from God and relies solely on the sufficiency of nature and human reason. The afterlife, if it exists at all, is completely separate from the natural world. We are rewarded and punished through the consequences of natural laws in this life. Deists might believe in heaven as a reward for man in the afterlife. Yet Deists doubt the existence of an eternal hell, since no man is completely evil. History is linear and determined by natural causes, in which God does not ever supernaturally interfere.

Naturalism -- The great inconsistency of Deism is that it agrees with Christian theism by presupposing a universe of order and reason created by God. Deism admits that man was originally created by God, but man is treated as though he is a product of this universe. If man is a personal being, then must not God also be personal in nature? If man is created in the image of God, then must not man be ultimately accountable to God's law rather than nature's law? Naturalism solves this problem by removing God from the picture altogether. Deism can thus be understood as the bridge between theism and naturalism. According to naturalism, man is a product of nature. He evolved from a lower organism, the universe itself was either preexistent or it came into being on its own. Origins and evolution must be explainable through consistent natural laws. Humanism, modernism, determinism, scientism, Darwinism, Marxism and Freudianism are each variations on the naturalist worldview.

Humanism is the belief that man is the ultimate being in the universe. *Modernism* the idea that man will inevitably solve any problem through the natural course of human progress. *Determinism* is the philosophy that all events are interdependent, not only determined by cause and effect, but that knowledge of reality can only be understood when viewing the whole universe in this manner. *Scientism* is the belief that measurable natural laws based on cause and effect determine the outcome of all physical events in the material universe. Scientism is also the belief that empirical facts can be determined either through observation or experimentation with known and controlled variables. In other words, all sequences of cause and effect events are reproducible, with the consequences of reaction always following certain circumstances or actions.

Darwinism synthesizes known scientific laws into a theory of total organic evolution; that man evolved from a lower animal, which in turn evolved from a single cell organism. Darwinism ultimately proposes that a complex universe evolved from a primitive state or that came into existence out of nothing. *Marxism* proposes an evolutionary and deterministic view of society, with mankind evolving into a communist utopia dispensing with the need for religion and private ownership of property. All social history is viewed as a struggle between economic classes; human history is driven by an undefined force leading society to a state of worldwide communism. *Freudianism* proposes a human psychology based on evolution and determinism. Freud speculated that since man was the product of sexual reproduction of lower animals, all human intelligence is a sublimation of the sex drive. Sex is the drive behind all human endeavor, since reproduction of a species is always the goal of deterministic evolution.

All naturalistic philosophies rely on the following beliefs. Only matter exists. Nature exists. God does not exist. The universe is based solely on cause and effect. The universe is orderly even though it was not created by a higher

intelligence. Human beings are products of nature. Although conscious rational beings, human beings are not fully able to understand the complex interaction of physical and chemical properties that make up the universe. Determinism is the basis of all human knowledge. Death is final. There is no afterlife. History is a series of causes and effects with no ultimate purpose and no divine destiny. Ethics are a deterministic invention of human thought.

The great paradox of naturalism is that man is a rational being -- the highest animal created by natural forces apart from God -- yet man has no control over his own destiny. If man was determined by the natural forces of the universe, then even man's philosophy of naturalism was determined by these forces. If man is merely a thinking machine, then how can man know that his thoughts are correct? The presupposition that man's view of the universe has any more validity than the conscious understanding of a rock is the great flaw of naturalism. The design and order of the universe may just as well be an illusion of our consciousness, which is nothing more than material actions and biochemical reactions. Deterministic philosophers ultimately saw this contradiction and struggled unsuccessfully to prove that man can know anything for certain.

Charles Darwin recognized this problem when he wrote in his *Autobiography*: "The horrid doubt always arises whether the convictions of man's mind, which has developed from the mind of lower animals, are of any value or at all trustworthy. Would anyone trust the convictions of a monkey's mind, if there are any convictions in such a mind?"

Nihilism -- If man's perception of reality is subject to his own mind, isn't it just as likely that reality itself is an illusion? If man's rational mind is nothing more than sensation and perception, then it is just as likely that nothing really exists except the illusion of reality. Nihilism, the belief in nothing, really isn't a philosophy at all, but more a feeling of despair. A *Gnostic* claims that "to know" is salvation; an *Agnostic* claims that "no knowing" is possible and salvation is meaningless. Nihilism is a worldview that leaves everything to chance. There is no possibility of knowing anything to be real, or knowing any "higher law" to teach us the standard of right and wrong.

After the two World Wars of the 20th century, Europeans had come to realize that rational natural science often compounded the problem of existence. Science did not provide all the answers. Stalin then made it difficult to believe in Marxism as a fitting social philosophy. When artists saw the difficulty of rationalism, they invented surrealism as an art form, as a reflection the absurdity of the modern world. Humanism had provided only alienation and anxiety. Despair seemed to be part of the human condition.

Nihilism is the absence of a philosophy. To the nihilist God is dead. Truth has no meaning. No philosophy is valid. Knowledge, ethics, history, beauty, reality, life and death have no purpose. There is really no such thing as an eternal purpose or divine destiny in a purely rationalist system. The naturalist turns to nihilism once he realizes that rationalism gives man no reason to believe his own thoughts.

In *Thus Spake Zarathustra*, Friedrich Nietzsche offered this piece of evolutionary perspective: "What is the ape to man? A figure of fun or an embarrassment. Man will appear exactly the same to the superman."

Nihilism is nothing more than naturalism brought to its logical conclusion. A consistent naturalist who presupposes that knowledge and reason are possible has virtually no way to prove it. At least he cannot explain why he is conscious of his own thoughts and reasoning. He is forced to concede "nothingness." The consistent naturalist also is forced to concede that ethics -- as a system of consequences resulting from moral actions -- exists. However, if God does not exist, then man is *never* guilty of having violated any "higher moral law." He is left only with "feelings of guilt." But what use does guilt serve? Man ought to deny those feelings of guilt if possible. Yet the feeling of having done a moral wrong persists in people everywhere. As Henry David Thoreau wrote in *Walden*, "All men live lives of quiet desperation." There is no possibility of transcendent forgiveness in a universe without God. These feelings of guilt can lead only to the despair of nihilism.

The nihilist is like the person who climbs to the top of a hill at night and stares into the starry universe. When he asks a non-existent Supreme Being, "What is the meaning of life?" there is absolutely no reply. Man innately senses that he must have a purpose and destiny, but naturalism offers no answer except eventual annihilation. Since man is an innately moral creature, the loss of meaning leads to hopelessness or nihilism.

Of course, nihilism as a consistent philosophy is impossible. From meaninglessness nothing at all is logical -- or else *everything* is logical. Nihilism is a belief in nothing. Yet to affirm that "nothing exists" is to affirm a belief in

everything that is able to be known. An *Atheist* who believes in "no god," first affirms the concept of God, and then affirms that he must know *everything* in order to know for sure that God does not exist outside the realm of his knowledge. But for a finite mind to know everything is impossible. Thus nihilism can *never* be a belief, but only a feeling of the despair of meaninglessness. The fact that man is prone to these psychological and emotional disorders is in itself a motive to seek meaning, value, beauty, virtue, destiny and purpose. At best nihilism can only affirm that there are deep questions that challenge the hearts and minds of men -- but there are no easy answers.

Existentialism -- The idea that there is no absolute truth, that all morality is relative has become the prevalent philosophy of the 20th century. "There are no moral absolutes, only moral interpretations." -- "Whatever is right or wrong for you is your own standard of morality." -- "Do your own thing." "Truth is whatever you believe in." -- "Whatever feels good do it, as long as you don't hurt anyone else." -- "Life is what you make of it." -- "Everything is subjective." These popular statements are just expressions of existentialism.

When one denies objective truth, the problem of human existence is intensified. René Descartes demonstrated that the subjective "I" is self-aware, when he postulated: "I think therefore I am." But everything else within us and without us -- our feelings, perceptions and thoughts -- can be doubted. Yet we are stuck with these feelings, perceptions and thoughts. So affirming that external reality exists is a lot easier to cope with than embracing the impossible nihilistic worldview. Existentialism can at least be systematized to answer the great philosophical questions.

The existentialist affirms that the material universe exists; but God does not exist. The universe exists as a logical order of causes and effects. Human knowledge is divided into objective and subjective understanding. Human beings exist, but man's existence precedes his essence. In other words, we each define who we are in our own minds. Each person determines his own reality and destiny. The objective external world is real. However, man often perceives the world as illogical and absurd. Man's perception of the external world is reality. Man creates subjective value and meaning to counter the absurdity of the objective world. This delusional self sees external events as connected; man creates cause and effect in his own mind where it doesn't really exist. History is viewed as linear, but it reaches no end or purpose. Ethics are an invention of the delusional mind.

The existentialist recognizes that the world is fallen and abnormal and that man is fallen and abnormal too. Therefore, whenever man creates his own meaning out of a world in a state of chaos, his mind becomes chaotic and delusional. But the delusional mind that creates the illusion of reality must really exist. That leads to further problems for the existentialist. The existentialist encounters inescapable paranoia, anxiety, fear, and even "nausea" when he realizes that the responsibility of creating meaning, a sense of mental sanity and salvation lies within a mind that is delusional from the beginning. The existentialist never knows for certain which reality is the real reality.

It is worth noting that modern philosophers who have self-consciously attempted to embrace existentialism were ultimately unsuccessful in trying to work out a system to explain human existence apart from God. Some ended up proposing a "Christian" existentialism which blended the presuppositions of Christian theism with the concept of objective and subjective existence. The others either committed suicide, became insane, or lived with a conscience wracked with guilt and despair. Ironically, the more earnestly man tries to deny the existence of God, the more he becomes obsessed with the idea of God and religion. He may deny God in word, but he is constantly shaking his fist at God in conscious hatred.

The willful death of modern rationalist and existentialist philosophies have led us to the idea of *postmodernism*. This is an "anti-philosophical" worldview. The postmodernist concludes: "We can't go any further without starting over. What is left? It's all been done before and thought of before and we still have not secured our salvation." In this sense, postmodernism appears to retreat into nihilism once more, but postmodernism is ironically attacked from the rear by another irrefutable paradox: "Once a man believes in nothing, soon he will believe in *anything*." Postmodernism thus opens the door to Eastern Monism.

Monism or Eastern Mysticism -- Eastern mysticism correctly understands that the logical process of reason is powerless to give final satisfaction to man's deepest spiritual needs. In Western rationalistic terms, to know reality is to distinguish one thing from another, to categorize it, and recognize its distinct relationship to other things. In the East to know reality is to pass beyond individual consciousness. The goal of life is to realize the oneness of all, and be one with all. Monism is the belief that all is one. There is no difference between God, a person, a horse, a tree or a rock.

Monism can be summarized as follows. The soul of the individual is the same as the Soul of the universe. Some spiritual beings are more at one with the cosmos than other things. There are many paths to the One. To be one with the universe is to empty one's self. To reach this state of oneness is to pass beyond human knowledge; and to pass beyond any difference between good and evil. Death is the end of individual existence, but to achieve nothingness is to reach Nirvana. Time is unreal. History is cyclical.

This worldview came to great popularity in the West during the 1960s and '70s partly through its promotion by popular superstars such as the Beatles. In 1967, Paul McCartney and John Lennon wrote "I am the Walrus" which opened with the line: "I am he as you are he as you are me and we are all together." Mass murderer Charles Manson adopted the Monistic worldview of the Beatles, and at the LaBianca murder scene in 1969, he instructed his followers to write in blood on the refrigerator door the words, "Helter Skelter," a song title from the Beatles' *White Album*. The oneness of right and wrong became a reality for Manson. He defended his actions by saying, "If God is One, what is bad?" Dostoyevsky said, "Anything is permissible if there is no God." But anything is also permissible if *everything* is God. There is no distinction between good and evil.

New Age Philosophy -- Eastern Monism spawned the New Age movement, which is a philosophy that combines elements of Eastern mysticism (that are easiest for Westerners to understand) with rationalism. Rationalism and humanism do not answer certain spiritual questions. New Age pretends to answer these questions.

New Age philosophy is extremely diverse, but can be summarized as follows. Each individual is God. As more individuals come to realize their divinity, the closer we will come as the human race to realizing the "New Age." The universe is unified, but is expressed on two planes: the visible universe accessible through ordinary consciousness, and the invisible universe accessible only through altered states of consciousness. The goal of New Age philosophy is to reach "cosmic consciousness," a state in which time, space and reality disappear. Physical death is not the end of the individual self. Death is just a transition to another form of life through reincarnation. Altered states of consciousness, projections of the soul out of the body, and mind training are used to reach a state of cosmic consciousness.

The popularity of New Age philosophy is one indication of the disintegration of Western culture. As information and travel between East and West becomes more fluid and as the prevailing humanist philosophy of the West is collapsing, Eastern philosophy is rushing in to fill the vacuum. The swing to Eastern mysticism has come at a time when Christianity is weak at the places where it would need to be strong to withstand the East. New Age philosophy is now a rising worldview in Western thought.

However, this discussion of Monism and New Age philosophy ends here, since we will examine these worldviews in more detail in chapter seven.