

Worldviews

I. Worldviews

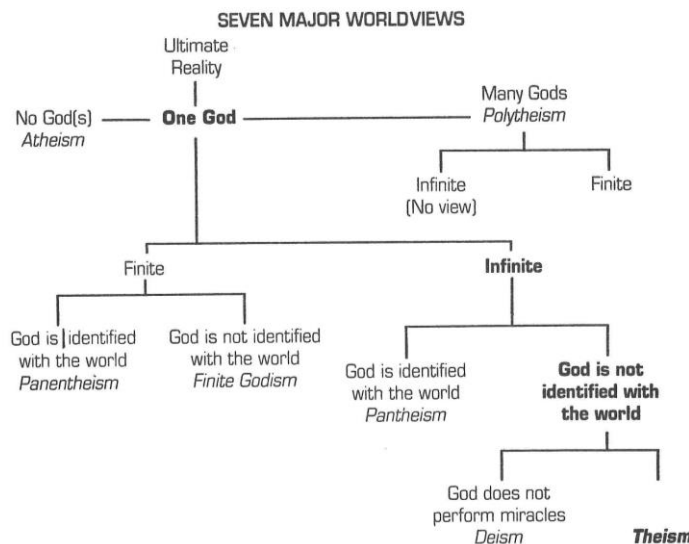
A. Definition. A worldview is "...a framework for answering life's major questions – who is God, how did I get here, why am I here, how do I know, how should I behave, how should I treat others, where am I going... it is a set of ideas, beliefs, convictions, values, and virtues for guiding one's life."¹ David Noebel

B. There are many worldviews. Our task is to sort them out and determine how to compare them.

C. Geisler's seven major worldviews.²

1. Atheism – There is no such thing as God
2. Polytheism – There are many finite Gods.
3. Panentheism – The world is God's body.
4. Finite Godism – God is not all powerful.
5. Pantheism – The world is God.
6. Deism – God made the universe and then left it alone. No miracles.
7. Theism – God is the creator of the universe, intervenes in it, and desires personal relationship with His creatures.

D. A worldview chart.³



E. A six worldview model.

1. Postmodernism – Truth is shaped by culture.
2. Naturalism – (Atheism, Agnosticism, Existentialism).
3. Polytheism and Spiritism – Thousands of religions.

¹ David A. Noebel, *Understanding the Times*, 2nd ed. (Manitou Springs, CO: Summit Press, 2006), 504.

² Norman L. Geisler, and Ronald M. Brooks. *When Skeptics Ask*. Grand Rapids, Mich.: Baker Books, 1996, 1990. (2001 7th printing), pp. 35-57.

³ Geisler and Brooks, *When Skeptics Ask*, p. 36.

4. Pantheism (Finite Godism, Panentheism) – Hinduism, Taoism, Buddhism, New Age consciousness, etc.
5. Deism – Impersonal Creator.
6. Theism (Christianity, Islam, and Judaism). Personal Creator.

F. Points of contrast.⁴

1. Reality – How is reality understood?
2. Man – Who is man and how does he fit in this reality?
3. Truth – What is truth?
4. Values – What values or morals are upheld by this system?

II. Worldview comparison.

A. Postmodernism – No universal religions. Truth is shaped by culture.

1. REALITY – Reality must be interpreted through our language and cultural “paradigm.” Therefore reality is “socially constructed.”
2. MAN – Humans are simply a product of their social setting. The idea that people are autonomous and free is a myth.
3. TRUTH – Truth is relative to one’s culture. Truths are mental constructs meaningful to individuals within a particular cultural paradigm. There is no such thing as absolute, objective truth.
4. VALUES – Values are defined by the social paradigm. Tolerance, freedom of expression, inclusion, and refusal to observe absolutes are the universal values.
5. Critique – Because truth is relative, postmodernism has no foundation to stand on. In contrast, the Bible presents God as the Creator of the universe and the One who establishes all truth. Jesus says in John 17:17, “Sanctify them in the truth, Your word is truth.”

B. Naturalism (Atheism, Agnosticism, Existentialism) – Natural laws explain everything.

1. REALITY – The material universe is all that exists. Reality is “one-dimensional.” There is no such thing as soul or a spirit. Natural law explains everything.
2. MAN – Man is the chance product of a biological process of evolution. Man is entirely material and the human species will one day pass out of existence.
3. TRUTH – Truth is simply scientific proof. Only that which can be observed with the five senses is accepted as real or true.
4. VALUES – No objective values or moral exist. Morals are individual preferences or socially useful behaviors. As such, they are subject to evolution and change.
5. Critique – Naturalism provides no solution to the basic metaphysical questions regarding the existence of the universe or the origin of personality. They must believe that something came from nothing and that matter generated the mind. Psalm 14:1 states, “The fool has said in his heart, there is no God...”

C. Polytheism and Spiritism – Many gods and spirits.

1. REALITY – The world is populated by spirit beings who govern what goes on. Material things are real but they have spirits associated with them.

4

Most of the comparisons and overviews for this section come from Dennis McCallum. A chart form can be accessed online @ <https://www.xenos.org/sites/default/files/essay-pdfs/Five%20Worldviews.pdf>

2. MAN – Man is the creation of the gods like the rest of the creatures on earth. Certain races have a special relationship with some gods who both protect them and can punish them.
3. TRUTH – Truth is discovered through a shaman figure who relates the desires of the gods and demons to man.
4. VALUES – Moral values take the form of taboos, which are things that irritate or anger various spirits. It is important not to irritate either good or evil spirits.
5. Critique – Since the gods are not eternal, but come from nature, then they are not the ultimate. “Why worship something that is not of ultimate value?”⁵ Isaiah 45:5, “I am the LORD, and there is no other, besides Me there is no God...”

D. Pantheism (Finite Godism, Panentheism) – Reality is identical with divinity.

1. REALITY – Only the spiritual dimension exists. All else is illusion. Everything is a part of God, and God is in everything and everyone.
2. MAN – Man is one with ultimate reality. Man is spiritual, eternal, and impersonal. Man’s belief that he is an individual is illusion.
3. TRUTH – Truth is the experience of unity with “the oneness” of the universe. Truth is beyond all rational description. Rational thought cannot show reality.
4. VALUES – There is no real distinction between good and evil. “Unenlightened” behavior is that which fails to understand essential unity.
5. Critique – This worldview uses reason to deny reason, a self-defeating prospect. Geisler asks the question, “If life in the material world is a dream of our own creations, why are we having such a bad dream?”⁶ In contrast, Paul states in Acts 17:24, “The God who made the world and everything in it is the Lord of heaven and earth and does not live in temples built by hands.” God is different from and transcends His creation.

E. Deism – God is the Creator but He is not involved with His creation.

1. REALITY – Reality is found in the created world. We can understand Him by looking at the things He has made.
2. MAN – Man is a freethinker. He can decide what reasonable path to follow regarding morals.
3. TRUTH – Deists reject the infallibility of the Bible and thus deny the truths of Scripture. God is identified through nature, not revelation.
4. VALUES – “All moral laws are grounded in nature... Some recognize the human desire for happiness as the single moral principle which guides actions.”⁷
5. Critique – Deists believe in the biggest miracle of all (Creation) but reject what they consider to be all the little miracles. Therefore the miracles of Jesus cannot be true, thus the Bible cannot be the infallible word of God. In contrast John writes in John 20:30-31, “Therefore many signs Jesus also performed in the presence of the disciples...so that you may believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God...”

⁵ Geisler and Brooks, *When Skeptics Ask*, p.55.

⁶ Geisler and Brooks, p. 46.

⁷ Geisler and Brooks, p. 41.

- F. Theism - “Belief in the existence of one God viewed as the creative source of the human race and the world who transcends yet is immanent in the world.”⁸
1. REALITY – The universe was designed, and exists by the power of God. He has control over it and exists distinct from it.
 2. MAN – Man is the distinct creation of God, created in the image of God. Man finds true significance in proper relationship with God.
 3. TRUTH – God, as designer and creator, is the source of all truth. Truth is objective as measured against God’s revelation in His Word and by His Son.
 4. VALUES – God is moral and good. As the divine Lawgiver He expressed perfect morality and values in His word.
 5. Critique – As David Noebel expresses it, “Christianity...is the one worldview that provides a consistent and truthful explanation of all the facts of reality...with regard to theology, philosophy, ethics...or anything else.... Christianity is the one worldview based on truth.”⁹

⁸

<https://www.merriam-webster.com/dictionary/theism>

⁹

Noebel, *Understanding the Times*, p. 17.