

“Worldview: Definitions, History, and Importance of a Concept”
Dr. David Naugle, Professor of Philosophy
Dallas Baptist University, Dallas, Texas, USA

Introduction:

“But there are some people, nevertheless — and I am one of them — who think that the most practical and important thing about a man is still his **view of the universe**. We think that for a *landlady* considering a lodger, it is important to know his income, but still more important to know his philosophy. We think that for a *general* about to fight an enemy, it is important to know the enemy’s numbers, but still more important to know the enemy’s philosophy. We think the question is not whether the **theory of the cosmos** affects matters, but whether, in the long run, anything else affects them.”

— G. K. Chesterton, *Heretics*, in *The Complete Works of G. K. Chesterton*, ed. David Dooley, vol. 1, (San Francisco: Ignatius Press, 1986), 41.

I was struck by this quote when I first read it, and I am still struck by it today. After all, what could be more practical or important than our view of the universe? Is any thing more influential in life than our basic theory of the cosmos?

I submit that the most important issue in any person’s life is not his or her education, career, finances, family, or friendships. Rather the most important issue in any person’s life is that person’s worldview because that person’s worldview guides and directs everything else, including one’s education, career, finances, family, and friendships. WV is the basic cause, all else is effect or result.

If I may speak about my own country, the USA, the most important thing facing America right now is not her politics or her economics, or her scientific, technological or educational prowess, as

important as these are. Rather, the most important issue facing America right now is America's worldview future. Will it be scientific naturalism? Nihilistic postmodernism? Commercial materialism and consumerism? Will it enjoy a recovery of its Judeo-Christian heritage, or some other religious option? What fundamental view of the universe, what theory of the cosmos will guide and direct America's future, especially in the realms of politics, economics, science, technology and education?

In agreement, then, with G. K. Chesterton, I submit that the most practical and important thing about us, whether at an individual or national level, is our view of the universe and theory of the cosmos — that is, the content and implications of our worldview. These claims beg the question: what, then, is a worldview? How should we define this concept?

I. Definitions and Illustrations of the Concept of Worldview

A. Definitions of the concept of worldview

A “view of the universe and theory of the cosmos” — G. K. Chesterton

“The whole manner of conceiving of the world and humanity’s place in it, the widest possible view which the mind can take of things.”

— James Orr

A “life-system,” rooted in a fundamental principle from which was derived a whole complex of ruling ideas and conceptions about reality.

— Abraham Kuyper

A “perspective on life, a whole system of thought that answers the questions presented by the reality of existence.”

— Francis Schaeffer

“A set of presuppositions or assumptions held consciously or unconsciously, consistently or inconsistently, about the basic make up of reality.”

— James Sire

“A comprehensive framework of one’s basic beliefs about things.”

— Albert Wolters

“It is ... an interpretative framework ... by which one makes sense ... of life and the world.”

— Norman Geisler

“Perceptual frameworks, ways of seeing, embodied in actual ways of life”

— Brian Walsh and Richard Middleton

“View of the world and the resulting way of life within it.”

— David Naugle

“A vision of God, the universe, our world, and ourselves rooted and grounded in the embodied human heart as the seat and source of our worship and spirituality, ideas and beliefs, loves and affections, and decisions and actions.”

— David Naugle

Perhaps some illustrations of what a worldview *is* and what it *does* will help us understand this concept a bit better.

B. Illustrations of the concept of worldview

1. Illustration of what a worldview *is*: lenses (glasses, sunglasses)

a. A wv is like lenses or a pair of eye glasses through which we look at the world.

Depending upon the lens prescription, wv glasses will make everything blurry or clear or somewhere in between.

b. Similarly a wv is like a pair of sunglasses or shades. They color everything we see.

Someone has said: it's not so much *what* we see, but *what* we see *with*!

There is, indeed, one universe, one world, one reality, one human existence.

But how we see it, understand it, and live in it depends upon the wv lenses, glasses or sunglasses through which we are viewing it, whether well or badly.

c. Similarly, a wv is like contact lenses: they affect everything you see, but you don't notice them! Wvs are often taken for granted, unnoticed, just like a fish does not realize it is wet.

2. Illustrations of what a worldview *does*:

- a. Map and compass: a wv guides, directs, orients; where we are, where we are going, and how to get there, personally, culturally.
- b. Filter and framework: a wv sifts and sorts, accepts and rejects, and gives context to life; it interprets, explains and imparts meaning to things — God, universe, our world, ourselves. It enlightens our minds about the world and our place within it.

Now that we have taken a look at some basic definitions of the wv concept and discovered what it is and what it does, we need to look a little deeper into the content and character of the concept of worldview.

II. Content and Character of the Concept of Worldview

A. Narrative

Every wv contains an irreducible narrative component at a minimum or even more, it constitutes the heart and core, the very matrix of a worldview, its very essence, content, structure and implications. WV's are story-formed. A wv is a concentrated, life-shaping story.

It consists of a basic story (the foundational myth) and offers multiple sub-stories that provide a whole way of understanding the cosmos and how to order our lives within it.

WV narratives typically involve a setting, characters, conflict, and resolution. Where are we? Who are we? What's gone wrong? What's the remedy?

Philosopher Alasdair MacIntyre seeks to recover a concept of an integrated human existence grounded in the integrity of a narrative which links birth, life, and death, or beginning, middle and end, into a singular, coherent story embraced communally.

He argues that it is natural to think of the self in the narrative mode, and that all human conversations and actions are best understood as "enacted narratives."

— Alasdair MacIntyre, *After Virtue: A Study in Moral Theory*, 2d ed. (Notre Dame, IN: University of Notre Dame Press, 1984), 211.

"Hence," MacIntyre writes, "there is no way to give us an understanding of any society, including our own, except through the stock of stories which constitute its initial dramatic resources. Mythology, in its original sense, is at the heart of things" (p, 216).

A central thesis then begins to emerge: man is in his actions and practice, as well as in his fictions, essentially a story-

telling animal. He is not essentially, but becomes through his history, a teller of stories that aspire to truth. But the key question for men is not about their own authorship; I can only answer the question “What am I to do” if I can answer the prior question “Of what story or stories do I find myself a part?” (p. 216)

WV's as a person's or a culture's definitive narrative supplies answers to life's deepest questions.

B. Big Questions

Our of its narrative resources, any worldview worthy of the name answers our deepest questions — philosophical, theological, religious, spiritual, social and cultural — about God, the universe, the world, about human existence and so on. Here are the big wv questions:

1. The theological question of the existence, nature, and works of God. Who is God and what is he like?
2. The metaphysical question about what is real and what is ultimately real, including the inquiry about the reality and nature of evil. What is real?
3. The epistemological question about the possibility, sources, nature, justification and goals of knowledge. What is truth?
4. The cosmological question about the origin, nature and destiny of the universe. Why is something here rather than nothing at all?
5. The anthropological question about the origin, nature and destiny of human beings. Who am I? Why am I here? Where am I going?
6. The ethical question about an objective moral order, what we should be like as persons, and how we should live. What should I be? What should I do? How should I live?

7. The aesthetic question about beauty as it is displayed in the cosmos and expressed through human imagination, artistry and creativity. What is beauty? Why the arts? What role do they play in life and culture?
8. The historical question about the meaning and purpose of human history. Is history circular or cyclical and endlessly repetitive, or is it linear with a beginning, middle, end?
9. The timeless soteriological question about redemption, change, and hope, both temporal and eternal. How can I be saved?

C. Symbols

The grounding narrative and the answers it supplies to the big question comes to expression in a variety of sacred symbols, which to challenge produces considerable fear and anger and backlash.

Symbols can be events, rites, people, places, or things. Some will be cultural in nature, some political, some religious, some personal, etc.

Flags, coats of arms, seals, stamps, colors, animals, plants, flowers, trees, crosses, crescent, songs/anthems, temples, churches, mosques, buildings, statues, etc.

WV based cultural symbols are often expressed in art and architecture.

The February 22, 2006, bombing of the Al-Askari Mosque in the Iraqi city of Samarra, which destroyed the shrine's famous golden dome, was a watershed moment in Iraq. It set off a firestorm of sectarian attacks and counterattacks between Sunni and Shi'ite Arabs in the country that continues to this day, pushing the country to the brink of civil war.

In the US a chief symbol would be the Statue of Liberty in NY harbor or the Washington Monument, in Washington, D. C.; perhaps for China it would be the Great Wall or the Yangze River or Tiananmen Square.

D. Memory

Memory refers to a community or a culture's recollection of its basic story, and its response, through time, to the worldview questions it answers (who are we, where are we, what is wrong, and what is the solution?).

A living memory is essential; Duke University's Stanley Hauerwas is correct when he observes that if a story is to remain vibrant and formative, there must be a community of people capable of remembering and reinterpreting that story as times change.

In a living story, he maintains, people draw strength by remembering. A remembered story renders a community or culture capable of ordering their new experience in a manner consistent with the story, that is, with their essential worldview. (Hauerwas, *A Community of Character*, 1981: 54).

E. Ethos

The ethos of a culture, rooted in its WV narrative, its questions and answers, and its symbols denotes the fundamental and distinctive character of a group, social context, or period of time, typically expressed in attitudes, habits, and beliefs. Germans call it the *Zeitgeist*, the spirit of the times.

Ethos is the animating spirit of a community derived from its overall worldview. It is the collective identity, personality and values of an historical epoch or social group.

This ethos embodies and expresses the uses of energy, talents and gifts of a people as directed by its overarching worldview.

A wv ethos constitutes a certain vision for the future and present form of daily life and practice, the last two items on our list of essential wv components.

F. Vision

Vision, as a perception or way of seeing, is derived from the depths of a worldviews story, answers to big questions, its memory and ethos.

Here the prescriptive character of a wv is central, for a wv not only describes how things are, but also how things should be, a vision or view **of** the world and a vision and view **for** the world.

Things are not yet as they should or could be.

A wv rooted vision gives people some idea of how things ought to be how and what they can do to actualize that future.

G. Practice

All these wv elements culminate in a particular way of life, a praxis, a way of being and living in the world.

A WV entails a way of life ... human action. It tells a people how they should then live.

Having defined a wv and illustrated it and given then these fundamental elements of a wv — its narrative, its answers to big questions, its expression in symbols, its memorable character, its ethos or spirit, its vision for the future, its way of life, we should examine the philosophic history of this concept ever so briefly.

III. History of the Concept of Worldview

A. Origin of the concept of worldview in the philosophy of Immanuel Kant
(1724-1804)

B. History of the concept of worldview in philosophy

1. Nineteenth Century worldview philosophers

- a. G. W. H. Hegel (1770-1831)
- b. Søren Kierkegaard (1813-55)
- c. Wilhelm Dilthey (1833-1911)
- d. Friedrich Nietzsche (1844-1900)

2. Twentieth Century worldview philosophers

- a. Edmund Husserl (1859-1938)
- b. Karl Jaspers (1883-1969)
- c. Martin Heidegger (1889-1976)
- d. Ludwig Wittgenstein (1889-1951)
- e. Jacques Derrida (1930-2004)
- f. Michel Foucault (1926-1984)

C. History of the concept of worldview in the natural sciences

- A. Michael Polanyi (1891-1976)
- B. Thomas Kuhn (1922-1996)

D. History of the concept of worldview in the social sciences

A. Psychiatry/psychology

- 1. Sigmund Freud (1856-1939)
- 2. Carl Jung (1875-1961)

B. Sociology

- 1. Karl Mannheim (1893-1947)
- 2. Peter Berger (1929-)

C. Economics: Karl Marx (1818-83) and Friedrich Engels (1820-95)

D. Anthropology

1. Robert Redfield (1897-1958)
2. Michael Kearney (presently UC Riverside)

III. History of the Concept of Worldview

A. Origin of the concept of worldview in the philosophy of Immanuel Kant (1724-1804)

There is virtually universal recognition among German historians of ideas that the notable Prussian philosopher Immanuel Kant coined the term *Weltanschauung*, that is, worldview in his work *Critique of Judgment*, published in 1790.

It originates in a quintessential Kantian paragraph that emphasizes the power of the perception of the human mind. Kant writes, “If the human mind is nonetheless to *be able even to think* the given infinite without contradiction, it must have within itself a power that is supersensible, whose idea of the noumenon cannot be intuited but can yet be regarded as the substrate underlying what is mere appearance, namely, our intuition of the world” [*Weltanschauung*].

That last phrase — “our intuition of the world” — is an English translation of Kant’s coined German term *Weltanschauung*.

The context of this quotation suggests that for Kant, *Weltanschauung* means something rather simple like a perception of the world gained empirically. Martin Heidegger notes that Kant employed *Weltanschauung* in reference to the *mundus sensibilis*, that is, as a “world-intuition in the sense of contemplation of the world given to the senses.”

From its coinage in Kant, who used the term only once and for whom it was of minor significance, it evolved rather quickly to refer to an intellectual conception of the universe from the perspective of a human knower.

Kant's Copernican revolution in philosophy, with its emphasis on the knowing and willing self as the cognitive and moral center of the universe, created the conceptual space in which the notion of worldview could flourish. The term was adopted by Kant's successors and soon became a celebrated concept in German intellectual life.

Weltanschauung captured the imaginations not only of the German intelligentsia, but of thinkers throughout Europe and beyond. The term's success is seen by how readily it was adopted by writers in other European languages either as a loanword, especially in the Romance languages, or as a copy word in the idiom of Slavic and Germanic languages.

This concept, indeed, had legs. Given its prominence, it was impossible for it to remain isolated on the Continent for long. Soon it crossed the channel to Great Britain and made its way across the Atlantic to the United States.

According to the *Oxford English Dictionary*, within seventy-eight years of its inaugural use in Kant's *Critique of Judgment*, *Weltanschauung* entered the English language in 1868 its naturalized form as "worldview."

Ten years later, the German term itself gained currency as a loan word in Anglo-American academic discourse. Since their mid-nineteenth-century beginnings,

both *Weltanschauung* and worldview have flourished, and become significant terms in the thought and vocabulary of thinking people in the English-speaking world.

Throughout the nineteenth century, therefore, *Weltanschauung* became enormously popular. By the 1890s, the Scottish theologian James Orr could say that as a concept, it had become “in a manner indispensable.”

B. History of the concept of worldview in philosophy

1. Nineteenth Century worldview philosophers

a. G. W. H. Hegel (1770-1831)

- Forms of consciousness, principles of the times, definite conceptions of the world, world outlook, outlook on life, national spirit, zeitgeist, general view of life, etc.
- Technically, the phenomena of the Absolute Spirit in its quest to objectify itself in the dialectic of history. Moods, perceptions, states of human consciousness as frameworks of reality.
- R. Solomon credits Hegel with “the discovery of alternative conceptual frameworks.”
- R. Rorty: Notion of alternative conceptual schemes has been a commonplace since Hegel.

b. Søren Kierkegaard (1813-55)

- Worldview = verdensanskuelse in Danish, only 5 times;
- Lifeview = livsanskuelse in Danish, 143 times.
- Fitting in with his existential philosophy = duty and importance of the individual to understand himself, one’s premises and conclusions, his conditionality and freedom, discover the

meaning and purpose of one's life
(hermeneutical and teleological questions).

- Livsanskuelse = natural and necessary, bound up with human existence.
- Livsanskuelse = the truth for which one can live and die.
- Livsanskuelse arises from reflection on experience, = the transubstantiation of experience; unusual illumination about life.

c. Wilhelm Dilthey (1833-1911)

- WV rooted in lived experience, an intuition about life which emerges from standing in the middle of life.
- Explication of the enigma of life, answers to the questions that comprise the riddle of life- what to do in world, why am I in world, how will my life end in world, where did I come from, what will become of me.
- Goal to understand life as it is lived by man. This gave rise to fundamental metaphysical impulse, to determine contours of reality in absolutist terms.
- Yet historical consciousness shows all metaphysical systems conditioned and relative, function of times and dispositions of

thinkers and were false, fictions and failure.
any future metaphysic would be the same.

- Hence, WD's metaphilosophy of wvs, analyze basic attitudes/intuitions of life that underlie and are expressed in poetry, religion, metaphysics.
- WV = Philosophy of philosophy, science of wvs. How human mind in lived experience sought to make sense of riddle of life.
- Avoids absolutist error of traditional metaphysics; still renders partial insights into nature of cosmos.

d. Friedrich Nietzsche (1844-1900)

- Deploys philosophical life boats to survive the tidal wave of meaninglessness and nihilism sweeping the West.
- WV and perspectivism central to FN's evaluation of the times.
- No transcendent God, or mind as reference point for meaning.
- *Only nature and historical process as basis for life.*
- People are products of worldviews as a person relative set of values and ideas.
- Wvs nothing but reifications. Human creations, but ascribed to reality.

- Established conventions, product of linguistic custom, habits. His definition of truth applies to wvs, p. 101.
- WVs = Established words, fixed concepts, institutionalized truths, artificial constructs feigning authenticity.
- Truth is a kind of error necessary for human survival. Subjective projections, Linguistic customs, Habituated thinking, reified cultural models, Ultimately fictions.

2. Twentieth Century worldview philosophers

a. Edmund Husserl (1859-1938)

- Worldview philosophy has several characteristics:
- Has scientific components, coupled with historical elements
- Has a unique teleological function to fulfill, to acquire wisdom.
- When wisdom is elaborated upon conceptually, undergoes logical development, and is enhanced with content of other disciplines, = full fledged worldview philosophy. Leads to creation of ideal human being.
- Is associated with perfect wisdom, ideal of humanity, capabilities, infused in collective consciousness, has alleged objective validity. It is practical and personal and scientific.
- YET WV IS NOT SCIENTIFIC: Wvs are values, science is fact. FACT/VALUE dichotomy. These two areas must be kept separate.
- Whether one chooses to pursue scientific phil or wv philosophy depends on personality and temperament. Also, what is at stake culturally: need a scientific philosophy in form of Husserl's phenomenology to rescue Western, European civilization.

b. Martin Heidegger (1889-1976)

- For MH, what is philosophy is a major question. Is it worldview with concerns about meaning of life and its purpose, giving advice for the practical conduct of life?
- Or is philosophy a robust, scientific, project of veracity, exactitude, setting forth clear, timeless, universal principles as scientific philosophy does?
- WV philosophy threatens authentic metaphysics of Dasein, and wants a scientific ontology vis a vis quicksands of wv philosophy.
- Deals with question about philosophy and wv in 3 treatises:
- The Idea of Philosophy and the Problem of Wvs 1919
 - Heidegger's 3rd alternative in this essay is that wv and phil are incompatible and must be separated. The previous association of these two was a catastrophe. Wv is stranger to phil, is unphilosophical in character, constitutes primary obstacle to doing philosophy and its true identity. Fact/value dichotomy.

- The Basic Problems of Phenomenology 1927
 - Continues same distinction as above. Wvs not theoretical, but give guidance for life and attitudes toward things, regulates interpret of existence and its meaning, gives wisdom, is a WV.
 - This is not scientific philosophy.
 - Scientific phil is search for being, wvs a study of beings. Understand beings only if first understand Being as such and this is what true phil does as his fundamental ontology.

- The Metaphysical Foundations of Logic 1928 :
No discussion needed. repeats.

- THE AGE OF THE WORLD PICTURE.
 - Worldviews are possible only when humans are conceived as subjects and the world is presented as object for interpretation. A subject/object dualism. Wvs are outgrowth of misleading metaphysic that is limited to modern age.
 - WITH MAN AS CENTER, WORLD PICTURE BECOMES IMPORTANT.
 - THE WORLD CONCEIVED AND GRASPTED AS A PICTURE. I.E., ITS

OBJECTIFICATION. IT IS SET UP BY
MAN. WORLD AS PICTURE IS
WORLD AS OBJECT, OBJECT OF
KNOWLEDGE AND
REPRESENTATION, OF USE AND
DISPOSAL.

c. Ludwig Wittgenstein (1889-1951)

- A true world and life view philosopher.
- Not interested in objectivist metaphysical presentation of the world in Cartesian tradition; wants to end subject object distinction and world alienation.
- Wishes to liberate humans from this construction and show the fly the way out of the fly bottle.
- Rather focuses on forms of life and language games. Change way humans see world.
- New epoch in West: linguistic basis of life. Plato and ontology; Descartes and epistemology; Wittgen. on grammar and language.
- Meaning is primary category of life over being and knowledge.
- Weltanschauung: used only 6 times. Shies away from it because of association of worldview with metaphysics and the

embodiment of truth, as sacrosanct reality constructs.

- Instead, LW wants to valorize a multiplicity of world pictures, forms of life and language games. See the world as it is given in a sociolinguistic context.

e. Postmodernism: Jacques Derrida (1930-2004), Michel Foucault (1926-1984)

- In the West, the premodern period had confidence that the human mind could obtain comprehensive view of universe, facts and values, especially based on God and Bible.
- In modern period, shift from God to man, revelation to reason, scripture to science, and that man, beginning with self, and scientific method, know world, at least its facts, if not values.
- In postmodern world, confidence in humanity as omniscient knower has been smashed, destroying hopes of knowing truth about universe, its facts or values.
- Incredulity toward metanarratives and wvs as a whole.
- All that is left is socially and linguistically constructed meanings systems: unprivileged, non-hegemonic, tolerated.

- Pomo = age of world-pictures,
incommensurate plurality of ways of speech.
- Post worldview era, perhaps; not a conflict of wvs, because must compete as rational accounts of same world; there is no single world, as many worlds as worlviewers. End of age of wvs. Is pomo the death of wvs?
- **Jacques Derrida** 174 (1930-2004)
 - Program of deconstruction, esp. realist language that seeks to represent reality; how difficult it is to tell the truth
 - Metaphysics of presence. a real given to which our words refer; language mirrors way things are.
 - Derrida seeks to overturn confidence that language can mimic or imitate or mirror reality. If not God, spirit, Idea, etc. then nothing but language, and free play of signifiers; nothing outside the text.
 - Language is self referential, arbitrary. Words are not referential, but just differ from each other, and meaning is endlessly deferred. Metaphysics of presence turns out to be a metaphysics of absence.
 - Hence, entire Western intellectual and cultural heritage is a hoax. Our wvs are

nothing but constructions of our own making, yet attributed to world and reality;

- Reifications only, and must be disabused of them.

➤ **Michel Foucault** 180ff (1926-84).

- Studies the history of the different modes by which people are made subjects. That the way people functioned in society was not as free, independent, individuals, but because of the power of ideologies, disciplines, discourses, epistemes that specified the a priori rules that ordered the thought, speech, behavior of all people.
- Knowledge regimes embedded in clinic, history of sexuality, asylum, governed life and behavior of people. He exposes their roots.
- Episteme crucial, and seems to function like a wv., defines the condition of all knowledge; an episteme like a wv in that it imposes norms and postulates, a general stage of reason, a structure of thought that cannot be escaped, a body of legislation. Hence, the power/knowledge connection.

C. History of the concept of worldview in the natural sciences

A. Michael Polanyi (1891-1976)

- Why did we destroy Europe? Tidal waves of destruction unleashed as a result of living in an unsponsored universe.
- For MP, the problem was a particular scientific wv, one rooted in objectivist conception of knowledge divorced from a human and moral base.
- The modern scientific image of the world was the problem, objectivist, detached, impersonal, ruthless in character, treating man as a object, not subject.
- Seeks an alternative ideal of knowledge, of personal knowledge.
- PERSONAL knowledge is infused in every act of knowing and this is not imperfection, but vital component. We see the universe from a wv center within ourselves; can't eliminate our human perspective from our picture of the world.

B. Thomas Kuhn (1922-1996)

- TK's philosophy of science fell like a bomb shell on fields of science and phil of science. Esp. powerful explosion in area of logical positivist view of science (Carl Hempel, Rudolf Carnap, Karl Popper): epistemic realism, universal scientific language, correspondence

theory of truth, objectivity, detachment, value neutrality, dispassionate inquiry, etc.

- Most signif. is that positivism was ahistorical and oblivious to the psychosocial dimension of the scientific enterprise. “History could produce a decisive transformation of the image of science by which we are now possessed.”
- Better to replace this false understanding of science than reject the bonafide historical examples. Positivism must adjust to history.
- Humanized and historicized vision of science to explain ordinary operations, and extraordinary transformations in science; sticky, complex, but true to life.
- Called Weltanschauung Revolution by Edwin Hung. WV Paradigms determine selection of problems for experimentation, relevance of data, content of observations, nature of hypotheses, acceptance of solutions, values, standards, methods, etc.

D. History of the concept of worldview in the social sciences

A. Psychiatry/psychology

1. Sigmund Freud (1856-1939)

- Definition of worldview: A *Weltanschauung* is an intellectual construction which solves all the problems of our existence uniformly on the basis of one overriding hypothesis, which, accordingly, leaves no question unanswered and in which everything that interests us has its fixed place.
- It will easily be understood that the possession of a *Weltanschauung* of this kind is among the ideal wishes of human beings.
- Believing in it one can feel secure in life, one can know what to strive for, and how one can deal most expediently with one's emotions and interests.
- Psychoanalysis is not a WV, but rather is a subspecies of the scientific worldview. Psychoanalysis can't create a wv; doesn't need one; it is a part of science and can adhere to scientific wv.

2. Carl Jung (1875-1961)

- As the most complex of psychic structures, a man's philosophy of life [Weltanschauung] forms the counterpart to the physiologically conditioned psyche, and, as the highest psychic dominant, it ultimately determines a person's fate.
- It guides the life of the therapist and shapes the spirit of his therapy.
- Since it is an essentially subjective system despite the most rigorous objectivity, it may and very likely will be shattered time after time on colliding with the truth of the patient, but it rises again, rejuvenated by the experience.
- Conviction easily turns into self-defense and is seduced into rigidity, and this is inimical to life.
- The test of a firm conviction is its elasticity and flexibility; like every other exalted truth it thrives best on the admission of its errors.

B. Sociology

1. Karl Mannheim (1893-1947)

- Definition of wv: pretheoretical global outlook.
- The genius or spirit of an epoch.
- Seeks a scientific, valid, verifiable method to discern the worldview of a culture.

- Places wv at pretheoretical level; ground zero for formal theoretical enterprises; foundational to construction of theoretical and cultural structures.
- 3 possible meanings that cultural products may possess: objective, expressive, documentary or evidential.
- Scientific knowledge of wv is through documentary or evidential meanings of cultural products.

2. Peter Berger (1929-)

- WV has its natural home in this academic setting of the sociology of knowledge: an inquiry into the social conditions under which certain wvs appear.
- Def of Sociology of knowledge: “Analysis of the regularities of those social processes and structures that pertain to intellectual life and to modes of knowing and as a theory of the existential connectedness of thought.
- Life and thought in the middle ages socially generated in Machiavelli’s quip: thought in the palace is one thing, but in the market place it is quite another.
- Root Proposition of SK: K Marx, *A Contribution to the Critique of Political*

- The substructure (unterbau) of economic relationships which determines the superstructure of (uberbau) of consciousness and intellect.
- Knowledge does not spring eternal out of the sky (revelation) or from the mind (rationalists), but is the result of socioeconomic conditions of life.
- Berger and Luckmann, Social Construction of Reality: argue that SK must concern itself with everything that passes for knowledge in society, not only formal knowledge but also, and esp. the socio-cultural life world of the common people as the primary source of cognitive awareness.
- Their concern is with a level of knowledge that precedes theorizing and wvs, the preconscious epistemic structure, with the social construction of reality.
- In *Social Construction of Reality*, 2 major moves:
- Society as an Objective Reality: How a view of reality has become congealed, reified for

average person, esp. via institutionalization and legitimation.

- **Society as Subjective Reality:** analyze the internalization of reality through a socialization process. This world that is created has both objective and subjective validity, and functions as law or nomos. Also, called a sacred canopy.
- Berger, The Sacred Canopy, sacred in its supreme value to adherents and a canopy in that it functions as a shield against threat of nihilism.
- Sacred Canopy: = A comprehensive system of law and order, then, is fabricated to shield its creators from catastrophe, from a direct encounter with nihilism. Should that line be erased or the canopy collapse, a crisis of the highest magnitude would result in the exposure of absolute nothingness.

C. Economics: Karl Marx (1818-83) and Friedrich Engels (1820-95)

- Socially constructed realities can harden into ideologies and used as weapons for social interest. Sacred canopies can solidify and be used as a club.
- **Friedrich Engels** 1820-95, mostly concerned about what is typically called Marxist wv, or

Marxist Leninist wv, esp. the materialists version. Matter, nature is the whole show, and mind is a function of matter. Dialectical materialism is the truly scientific philosophy. Scientific, dialectical materialism is the normative way of conceiving of reality. Quote, Grt Soviet Encyc. 234

- Implications of this wv are total, affecting every area of thought, life, and culture. Engels believed that Marxism embodied implications of materialist wv for all important fields of knowledge, and sought to transform the sciences from its vantage point.
- **K Marx 1818-83**, (p. 235ff) complacent about broader implications of his own wv, very interested in ideology. It is a subset of a wv. and is used as cognitive weaponry in service to class interests, of any kind.
- why have there been so many false beliefs about society and human nature. Rhetoric and propoganda, intellectual limitations, to be sure. But more. Ideology is inevitable in a class society because the economically dominant class requires the existence of false beliefs for its continued dominance and has resources to perpetuate its beliefs that are in its interests.
- Dominant class constructs systems of belief about ultimate concerns, communicates them

persuasively to masses to keep them subdued. Then working class believes these reifications and develops false consciousness, and are kept in check.

- Ideas of ruling class are the ruling ideas. The ruling material forces in society are also the ruling mental forces. Whoever controls the material productions in society also controls the mental productions as well.
- For Marx, ideas generated out of social and material conditions of life; “Life is not determined by consciousness, but consciousness by life.”
- Goal of Marx and Engels: to purge working class of their false consciousness, liberate them for revolution against their oppressors.
- Philosophers before have only interpreted the world differently; the goal is to change it.
- Let them revolt against the rule of thoughts.” = Paulo Freire, *Pedagogy of the Oppressed*, critical consciousness, take action against oppressive elements in society.
- Of course, Marx and Engels’ perspective not an ideology or a reification, but the true scientific work, possessing the true scientific and metaphysical credentials.

D. Anthropology

1. Robert Redfield (1897-1958)

- Definition: the way people characteristically look outward upon the universe, the designation of the existent as a whole. Associated with issues of what is and ought to be, patterns and forms of thought, attitudes, time, emotions, etc. The structure of things as man is aware of them. The way we see ourselves in relation to all else.
- Wvs as old as humankind and as old as other human matters, like culture, human nature, personality.
- Not everyone even in the same culture has the same wv; they differ even within a culture, esp. by those who are more theoretical, philosophical, thoughtful in nature, contemplative.
- RR wants to know what is universal in human beings and in wvs.
- 1. There is only one world itself, variously interpreted.
- 2. Everyone has a wv, no exceptions.
- 3. Every wv has a set of common themes and categories, wv universals:
 - a. Self: I and me.

b. Other: human (young and old, male, female, us, them) and non-human (God and nature)

c. Space and time

d. Birth and death

- Each wv filled with radically different content per culture.
- Four sets of questions based on these wv themes:

What is confronted?

What is the nature of not-man?

What is man called upon to do?

What is the source of orderliness in things?

The Primitive Worldview:

1. Unitary character of the cosmos as unity of God, man, nature; as such it was sacred, personal.
2. Mutuality and cooperation between man and not man. God, man, nature, coexisted in system of interdependence and support.
3. Man and not man are joined together by a universal moral order, established system of right and wrong, with specific consequences for each.

The Transformation of the Primitive WV by secular modernism

1. The rise of civilization, science, cities, technology has weakened, if not overthrown this primitive wv.
2. Man separated himself off from this interdependent system, and stood over against it as something to be known and mastered.
3. Universe is now as system of objective properties, physical mechanism and lost its sacral character (disenchanted); moral order of the universe vanished.
4. World is uncaring, hostile, indifferent to human welfare.

RR valorization of primitive wv and is its ambassador

1. RR viewed this transformation negatively, disruptive.
2. Believed in purity of folk culture, of primitive cultures, and sought to re-impose its vision on secularized modernity in cause of peace and understanding and the good life.
3. This became RR's reforming agenda; used socially and politically.

4. Modernity had corrupted things and was in serious need of redemption.
5. Primitive cultures were positive cultural alternatives and needed to be introduced evangelistically and for salvific purposes. RR an incipient postmodernist in his critiques of modernity.

2. Michael Kearney (presently UC Riverside)

- Def of wv: a set of images and assumptions about the world; a people's way of looking at reality, images and assumptions about the Self and the not self, and ideas about the relationship between them (and other ideas) that provide a more or less coherent, though not necessarily accurate way, of thinking about the world.
- Wv is a tool for exploring the recesses of socially constructed human consciousness and has potential (unrealized) for liberation in all senses of the word.
- There is a deep connection between worldview and ideology. Wv serves the interests of those who hold it.
- Even theories about wv are ideologically driven. Esp. between cultural idealists and

historical materialists. Hence, the sociological relativity of wv theory itself. Its source was American liberal bourgeois culture in general and liberal anthropology.

- He calls for a recognition of the ideological biases informing wv theory itself.
- Cultural idealism: ideas shape life, not life shaping ideas. Culture is the product of ideas, wvs a prime mover. Anthropologists upper class and never experienced poverty and fail to realize that most aren't preoccupied with ideas as they are. Survival for them is key concern.
- Historical materialism: life shapes ideas. History and material factors of life shape consciousness. The historical material substructure is the dog that wags the superstructural tail of thought and consciousness.

IV. Philosophic Implications of Worldview

A. Metaphysical implications: on the real

- At its root, a wv specifies what its adherents believe to be true about reality and being in all its aspects.
- Wvs are metaphysical constructs, saying: this is reality, the way things really are. This is the nature of the universe and of human beings.
- Wvs are ontologies, saying this is what being is and what all beings are, the existence and nature of being and all beings.
- **From** a wv conviction about reality and being/s, there flow many implications for epistemology, for ethics, for aesthetics.

B. Epistemological implications: on the true

1. Reason

Reason as that capacity that has distinguished us from animals;

- Pascal: man is a thinking reed; by means of thought he can comprehend the universe.
- What is the nature of rational thought and how does reason function?
- What is the relationship of reason and wv, that is, between rationality and a particular conception of the universe?
- What influence does wv have on reason, if any?

- Is there an arch or Olympian form of reason that transcends history and particularities and is the same for all? Immaculate, pure, free of presuppositions?
- There are disputes 1. Among anthropologists regarding what constitutes cultural rationality; 2. Among Jews, Gentiles, Christians regarding what constitutes religious rationality; 3. Among philosophers regarding what constitutes epistemic rationality.
- THESIS: rationality is context and commitment dependent, a function of the worldview of the reasoner.
- Reason is embarrassed by nakedness and seeks to be clothed in a narrative based tradition.
- Recognize the content of the absolute presuppositions upon which one's reasoning is based, and the narrative, historical, worldview tradition reason inhabits.
- In short, worldviews are the rails on which reason travels

2. Interpretation/hermeneutics

- Aristotle: All instruction proceeds on basis of pre-existent knowledge (Posterior Analytics).
- So too, interpretation: what we understand also proceeds on basis of various preunderstandings and commitments. Two implications:

- Meaning of a text is determined in advance by certain pre-existing knowledge.
- Interpretations are subjective and debarred from pure science. Responses to these implications:
 - This is inescapable condition of interpretation and recognition the inevitable bias accompanying all hermeneutic acts. So premodern and postmodern eras in the west.
 - Try to design an objective, scientific method of explanation that circumvents the problem and guarantees objective results. So modernity.
 - Yet this is naïve; human nature is too complex; self dispossessed objectivity is impossible
 - Incoherent: it established a prejudice against prejudice; a new tradition against tradition.
 - Hence, acts of interpretation governed by traditions, prejudices, presupps, indeed, by wvs.
 - R. Bultmann: “There is no such thing as presuppositionless exegesis.”
 - M. Heidegger and H. G. Gadamer critique this Enlightenment position by reconnecting humanity to history, being and world.
 - Hermeneutics central to their philosophies; no god’s eye point of view. Interpretation essential to humanity to human condition.

3. Knowledge

- What kind of impact does a wv have on knowing, on knowledge?
- When it comes to wv, are adherents connected to the world, or just their view of it? Or a bit of both?
- Do we attain to thought or to things, or to things through thought? 3 views:
 1. **Common sense realism**; wv plays no role in knowing; objectivism; all is black and white; the world is well found.
 2. **Critical realism**; wv as a conditioning, mediating role in knowing; combines objectivity and subjectivity; things are gray. World is partly lost and partly found.
 3. **Anti-realism**; wv plays a total role in knowing; know wv, but not world. Subjectivism, all is dark. Reified belief systems. Reality is absence. World is well lost.

C. Ethical and aesthetic implications: on the good and beautiful

1. On the good:

- Wvs, given their particular view of reality, establish what its adherents would consider the highest or greatest good for human beings: in Latin, the *summum bonum*

- Who's really well of, who's got it good, who is living well, living nobly.
- Or it would suggest, given a particular view of reality, that there is no such thing, no greatest good, nothing ultimate toward which human beings ought to live their lives. Nihilism: no meaning of life. Existentialism: create meaning in life for yourself.
- Wvs, then, have profound ethical and teleological implications

2. On the beautiful:

- What is beauty? Is beauty really in the eye of the beholder?
- What is ugliness? Is what is ugly merely a personal opinion?
- Or is beauty objective, grounded in something higher than our private opinions and responses to apparent alleged instances of beauty? Are some things truly ugly?
- Wvs, given their particular view of reality, establish a standard for beauty or for its absence.
- Wvs also, given their particular views of human nature, determine the nature of human artistic activity, perspectives on imagination, the role of the arts in personal and cultural life.

V. Worldview Alternatives and Tests

A. Philosophical worldview alternatives

- Agnosticism/skepticism
- Atheism/Naturalism
- Nihilism
- Secular Humanism
- Existentialism
- Modernism
- Postmodernism

B. Religious worldview alternatives

- Theism
- Judaism
- Christian Theism
- Islamism
- Buddhism
- Taoism
- Confucianism
- Pantheism/Hinduism

C. Other worldview alternatives ...

C. Worldview tests

1. Coherence test: is it non-contradictory or coherent?

Intellectual agreement, rationally coherent, non-contradictory; fits together; if agree, not necessarily true; if disagree, have a falsehood.

2. Empirical test: does it explain all of life/existence adequately?

Fit with reality? Cogent explanations and interpretations? Cover and explain all of reality? Things omitted? Open up and elucidate?

3. Existential or pragmatic test: does it work, is it fulfilling?

Does it work? Livable? Cash value? Pay off?
Applied to areas of life and experience? Personal
satisfactory? Fulfilling?

V. Worldview Influence and Dialogue

A. Worldview influence

1. Personally
2. Culturally
3. Politically

B. Worldview dialogue: Mikhail Bakhtin (1895-1975)

- **Speech Genres and Other Late Essays**, “dialogical imagination.”
- A great, critical conversation; each makes distinctive contributions, and also learns from the other.
- I know what I know.
- You know what you know.
- I need to know what you know
- You need to know what I know
- I critique your view
- You critique my view.
- Leads to increased understanding of reality; look along and at everything.

Conclusion:

At the beginning of my speech I stated that the most important issue facing an individual person was his or her worldview and that was because it influences everything else.

I also stated that the most important issue facing my own country, the USA, was her worldview future. What basic ideas and outlooks will guide America in days and years ahead?

If I may be so bold, I would like to also suggest that the most important issue that you face individually and that China as a country faces nationally is the matter of your worldview future.

Human life's most important issues are not just economic, not just political, not just scientific, not just technological, not just educational, and so on. Worldview is more basic, more fundamental, more determinative than any of these matters.

The question about your future concerns your worldview.

The question concerning China's future concerns China's basic worldview. So then I offer some concluding questions?

- What is your own worldview? What worldview will guide you into your own future personally?
- What ideas will guide the future of modern China?
- Will China be a militant, and nationalistic people in the twentieth-first century?
- Will nihilism, materialism, and atheism be the governing ideas for the worldview of the Chinese people?
- Will Buddhism and folk religions rise again to dominate China's thinking?
- Will a new version of Confucianism find a hearing among China's students and teachers and intellectuals?
- What might be the place of the Christian gospel, the worldview based on the Old and New Testaments, in China's search for an all-comprehensive national ideology?

Whatever the answers to these questions might be, with G. K. Chesterton was right when he said, whether about a person or a nation, that

“But there are some people, nevertheless — and I am one of them — who think that the most practical and important thing ... is still a **view of the universe**.

We think the question is not whether the **theory of the cosmos** affects matters, but whether, in the long run, anything else affects them.”

Hence, as the title of my speech indicated, we need to understand the definitions, history, and importance of the concept of worldview.

Thank you very much.