

“Evaluating a Worldview”

Worldview Camp: Connection Point Christian Church – 2022

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Introduction

A. Worldview summaries

Worldview	Basic Principles
Secular Humanism (Optimistic Atheism)	No God but optimistic. Emphasizes reason, science, and certainty. Everything (including life and all species) has a purely <i>physical</i> explanation through evolution. No existence after death.
Nihilism (Pessimistic Atheism)	No God and pessimistic. No ultimate truth, value, or meaning. The universe is absurd. No existence after death.
Existentialism	No God. Both pessimistic (an absurd universe) and optimistic (define yourself, be free, and have fun). Emphasizes feeling and freedom. Live for today.
Postmodernism	Stresses uncertainty and relativism. Everything (including reason and science) is under suspicion. No absolute truth. Truth is based on one’s perspective.
Deism	God created the universe but does not intervene in it. God is only “transcendent” (above) us. God gave moral principles to live by that can be discovered in nature and conscience. No miracles or special revelation from God.
New Age Pantheism	Everything is One and part of God. Stresses different techniques to experience spiritual enlightenment (or oneness with the universe or God). Accepts meditation, karma, and reincarnation. Reason, logic, and language are deceptive; we have to go beyond them and use mystical experience.
Biblical Christianity	A personal and loving God created the universe and acts in human history. He is <i>above</i> us (transcendent) as well as <i>with</i> us. He is Immanuel (=God with us) and Incarnate (=God in flesh). Death brings a final judgment.

B. Important Scriptures:

1. **Colossians 2:8** “See to it that no one takes you captive by philosophy and empty deceit, according to human tradition, according to the elemental spirits of the world, and not according to Christ.”
2. **2 Corinthians 10:5** “We destroy arguments and every lofty opinion raised against the knowledge of God, and take every thought captive to obey Christ.”

C. Comments about worldviews:

1. Worldviews _____ **OVERLAP** _____.
2. We cannot absolutely _____ **PROVE** _____ any worldview.
3. We can _____ **COMPARE** _____ worldviews.

D. Some strategies:

1. Become more _____ **CONSCIOUS** _____ of worldview questions.
2. _____ **IDENTIFY** _____ the worldview.
3. Uncover problems _____ **WITHIN** _____ the worldview by asking good _____ **QUESTIONS** _____.

I. SECULAR HUMANISM (Optimistic Atheism)

A. Emphasis: reason and science.

B. Questions & problems.

1. Origin of the UNIVERSE _____?
2. Origin of LIFE _____?
3. The basis for REASON _____?
4. The basis for MORALITY _____ (e.g., justice; equality)?
5. Human FREEDOM _____?

C. Atheist quotations.

Alex Rosenberg on the universe: "Why is there a universe at all? No reason at all. Why is there a multiverse in which universes pop into existence for no reason at all? No reason at all!" (*The Atheist's Guide to Reality*, Kindle, pp. 38-39).

George Whitesides on the origin of life: "Most chemists believe, as do I, that life emerged spontaneously from mixtures of molecules in the prebiotic Earth. How? I have no idea" (*Chemical & Engineering News* 85 [2007]: 12-17).

Francis Crick on the origin of life: "An honest man, armed with all the knowledge available to us now, could only state that in some sense . . . [the origin of life] is 'almost a miracle'" (*Life Itself: Its Origin and Nature*, 88).

Alex Rosenberg on meaning: "Individual human life is meaningless, without a purpose, and without ultimate moral value" (*The Atheist's Guide to Reality*).

Will Provine on free will and meaning: "There's no human free will. If you believe in [naturalistic] evolution, you can't hope for there being any free will. There's no hope whatsoever of there being any deep meaning in human life. We live; we die; and we're gone" (in the movie "Expelled").

II. NIHILISM (Pessimistic Atheism)

A. Emphasis: No truth, value, or meaning. Nothing matters!

B. Questions and problems.

1. Do you actually live like nothing has any truth, value, or meaning?
2. Do you really think *nothing* is ever "wrong" for EVERYBODY _____?
3. In principle, wouldn't it be good if there were real meaning and value to your life?

John Cage emphasized that the universe operates by mere chance, but he was also a mushroom expert: "I became aware that if I approached mushrooms in the spirit of my chance operations, I would die shortly. So I decided that I would not approach them in this way."

III. EXISTENTIALISM

- A. Emphasis: Feeling and Freedom.
- B. Questions and problems.
 - 1. How is **FREEDOM** _____ even possible in a purely materialistic universe?
 - 2. Do you really think (and act) like nothing is absolutely “wrong”?

IV. POSTMODERNISM

- A. Emphasis: Truth totally depends on your perspective. Nothing is true for *everyone*.
- B. Questions and problems.
 - 1. Do you think that truth is *always* **RELATIVE** _____?
 - 2. Would you say that there is no absolute truth?
 - 3. Would you get on a plane that was engineered by a postmodernist?

V. DEISM

- A. Emphasis: God creates but not act **IN** the universe. (See Thomas Jefferson’s *Life and Morals of Jesus of Nazareth*.)
- B. Questions and problems.
 - 1. If God is powerful enough to create the universe, why can’t he act **WITHIN** _____ the universe (e.g., miracles, the incarnation)?
 - 2. Do you ever pray?
 - 3. In principle, wouldn’t it be good of God were *personal* and acted in this world and possibly in your life?

VI. NEW AGE PANTHEISM

- A. Emphasis: Everything is **ONE** and part of God.
- B. Questions and problems.
 - 1. If everything is **ONE** _____, how can there be an ultimate distinction between “good” and “evil”?
 - 2. Why try to follow the “*right path*” (e.g., 8-fold path in Buddhism) if there is no ultimate distinction between “right” and “wrong”?

VII. BIBLICAL CHRISTIANITY

- A. Emphasis: Personal **C**reator; Loving **S**avior; God **I**ncarnate.
- B. Questions and problems.
 - 1. Does God really exist?
 - 2. If God exists, is he **GOOD** _____ (because of all the evil in the world)?
 - 3. Was Jesus really God in flesh and rise from the dead?
 - 4. Is the Bible historically **RELIABLE** _____ and still relevant today?

Reflection and Discussion on “Evaluating a Worldview”

Use your session notes and other resources to reflect on, and discuss, the following.

1. On a scale of 1–10 (with 10 being the best), choose a number that indicates how well you think you understand the main ideas of this session?
 - a. Give a brief explanation of your answer.
 - b. If the number was below 5, what can be clarified that might help you understand better?
2. What is one highlight or big idea you took from this session?
3. Reflect on the main worldviews covered in this session and discuss the following questions.

Secular Humanism	Deism
Nihilism	New Age Pantheism
Existentialism	Biblical Christianity
Postmodernism	

- a. Do you have any friends who seem to have one of these worldviews? Which worldview(s)?
- b. Try to explain how you came to your conclusions.
4. One idea in this session was that people sometimes say or do things that are *not consistent* with the worldview (or the belief system) they profess.
 - a. What examples can you think of in American culture (e.g., celebrities, TV or movie characters)?
 - b. What examples can you think of among your friends or acquaintances? (Be careful not to identify anyone by name.)
 - c. What examples of inconsistency can you see among professing Christians or even in your own life?
 - d. How can this challenge you to grow in your own faith?
5. How could these worldview evaluation strategies help you understand or witness better to your friends or acquaintances? How could they be applied in your communication with them?
6. What question(s) do you have about what was covered? (These can be discussed in your small group, but they might also be addressed in a follow-up session or by the final Q&A panel.)