CIRCLING

The Road to Reason Series (V of VI) – The Dream and Spiritualist Reason

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https://youtu.be/nn8dPN0MN3c

This is a continuation of our Road to Reason series: a collection of blog posts dedicated to exploring the role of reason within some of the today's dominant global worldviews. Here are our earlier posts in the Series (Introduction, I, II, III, and IV):

Today's Yellow Brick Road (Introduction to the Series)

The Road to Reason Series (I of VI) – The Scarecrow and Reason's Tools

The Road to Reason Series (II of VI) – The Wicked Witch and the Law of Non-Contradiction

The Road to Reason Series (III of VI) – The Tin Man and Beyond Reason

The Road to Reason Series (IV of VI) – The Lion and Materialist Reason

Why Study Worldview?

There are many good reasons to study worldview. But a primary reason Praxis Circle studies global worldview is the practice improves our own worldview and makes the world a better place. Here's that darn word again: Why? 1) Because humans exist together and influence each other, whether intending to or not. We want to be influenced and influence others for the good. (And we also want to know what "the good" is or could be.)

2) Because America is riddled with anger and culture warring in part from a lack of understanding of varying worldviews, and this often leads to destructive violence. We saw it last summer and see it on a continuing basis across America. We want to reduce anger and violence.

3) Because it's always better to seek to understand before being understood. While worldviews can be irreconcilable on important issues – there is no magic bullet for human conflict and

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never will be, in our opinion – dialogue at the worldview level often reduces conflict and increases the chances of negotiated, compromised, and peaceful resolution.

We want peace to reign, so that persuasion might work again in America.

To summarize our short answer for today, we believe most human beings are trying to do the right thing, and we need to strive to see that quality, an earnest desire to do good, in each other. (This was a key point in our last post that highlighted "a theist and atheist walking into a bar." So, Cheers!)

How Reason (and Truth) are Central Issues to Worldview

The approach taken toward Reason (the workings of Mind) and Truth are central to every worldview.

In prior Circling posts, we have tried to answer such basic questions as, among others: What is a worldview?, Who has a worldview?, Why is worldview study controversial?, and Worldview and Belief? The best way to access these posts is to go to our Today's Worldview Jungle post (8-14-20, see link to the left here) and scroll down the page to where links are provided (in blue) to these questions, or go to our master blog page linked here and use the Search function on the right, above the blue Search button.

To refresh: What is a worldview? A short definition might be "the narrative into which humans place themselves to answer life's most important questions, often to determine and achieve their goals." Each person sees the world through his or her own worldview lens. Worldview technical talk often refers to this as a *vertical* definition of the word.

In contrast and in an effort to build on that definition, what we are doing in this Road to Reason Series (I – VI) is offering a *horizontal* overview of popular macro-level worldviews commonly found around the world. In doing so, we are focusing on the varying approaches to reason because it's only human reason that can examine issues of being, knowledge, and experience that determine the various approaches to truth and other vital worldview issues, such as morality and governance. (We will get to all of that later.)

Granted, in taking this approach, we are necessarily painting with a very broad brush.

Each worldview has its own approach to reason and truth, which Series I and II outlined in the Western tradition. Western ideas about reason and truth have had an extremely large global impact. The West's current approaches grew out of the Classical Greek and Roman worlds in tandem with the holy books of the Abrahamic monotheisms (Judaism, Christianity, and Islam). The influence of Socrates, Plato, and Aristotle alone have had tremendous influence in North and South America, Europe, the Middle East, Africa, and into Asia.

This influence is so widespread that we wonder whether these schemes of reason and truth are universal among humans, along with other universals. Many refer to such universals as *natural law*. The implication would be that the Creator, if there is one, has made the world this way.

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Spiritualist Reason

To emphasize that the Western approach is most certainly not universal or accepted by all, we began our horizontal worldview survey with Road to Reason III in the East to show that much of the humanity in Asia and elsewhere strives to move from this world of illusion into another ultimate reality that is beyond "reified" Western human reasoning, reality, logic, and truth. In these worldview schemes the divine often fully inhabits ultimate reality and communicates Its love and presence to individual consciousness. There is a human desire to become one with it.

Last time in Road to Reason IV, we then came back to the West to examine briefly modern materialism and materialist reason under four worldview categories: Human Secularism, Marxism, Postmodernism, and Nihilism. Today, we stay in the West, but take a 180 degree turn from 100% materialism (consciousness, the mind, and thus reason being purely material) to 100% spiritualism (the opposite end of the spectrum, where consciousness, the mind, and reason are purely spiritual).

Worldview's dualistic spectrum is often described with reference to the body (material or natural) versus the soul (spiritual or supernatural) dichotomy, or, to make reference that goes beyond any one person, the natural world versus the supernatural world or heaven. In a dualistic scheme, the individual soul connects to the supernatural.

What is reality? Is it finite/material or infinite/spiritual? Or somehow both, or something in between?

As we've said before, there are almost as many different worldviews as there are people, so it's very difficult to generalize. You will see this as we watch and listen to the testimonies featured in the playlists below. In fact, often macro-categories like materialist (again, see Series IV last time) or Christian (see Series VI next time) have literally thousands of sub-categories.

As a result, the same worldview label (e,.g., Hinduism, postmodernism, or New Age) can end up in more than one category, as we will show in a chart next time. Today's PC Contributors believe all of reality is spiritual, consisting of infinite consciousness. They base this belief on their intensive study and personal experience. In fact, they stake their lives on it.

Which brings us to today's Wizard of Oz story . . .

The Dream

When we left Dorothy in the Land of Oz in Series IV last time, she had finished her quest with the Scarecrow, Tin Man, and Lion to steal the Wicked Witch's broom. However, as you know, once she presents the broom to the Wizard back in Oz, he proves to be a fraud, and Dorothy, with the rest of us, remains just as lost and upset near the end of the movie as when the adventure began. Everybody in Oz and in the audience is crest-fallen for Dorothy.

Clearly, it's difficult for anyone to go there mentally, and the author here refuses. But no worries: The story isn't over.

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Today, we resume our own trip down the Road to Reason with the famous Wizard of Oz clip above. The Wizard has taken off in his balloon to fly Dorothy back over the rainbow and homeward, though leaving her in Oz without any back-up plan.

Then, just as the audience fears Dorothy is never going to make it home, Glinda the Good Witch appears from nowhere in her bubble, yet again, one final time, to remind Dorothy she's still wearing the magic Ruby Slippers.

Yes!

Since Dorothy has kept the faith by completing her quest, Glinda helps Dorothy with a wave of her wand into a dream, as she taps her slippers together, where her consciousness circles from ultimate reality to ultimate reality.

Though no one's quite sure what's ultimate by this point, all are ecstatic because Dorothy and Toto are finally headed home.

At the end of the movie, the audience realizes she's been in a dream all along, never quite knowing which state of consciousness is real. Either/or, both, or neither? Does it matter?

Well, this famous scene is a terrific representation of the worldview of our well-known PC Contributor, Eben Alexander, who survived a legendary Near Death Experience (NDE) in 2008 and lived to write a best selling book about it, *Proof of Heaven* (2012). His fascinating Full Interview describing the experience is linked via his underlined name. The experience of being fully brain dead for several days, then miraculously coming back to life and full health, transformed Eben's outlook as a brain surgeon from the naturalist, atheistic worldview to a fully spiritual, theistic worldview.

No greater worldview transformation is possible, and Eben's experience is a much more common experience than most realize. To Eben, God is as real as can be, and we are all in safe and loving hands, whatever the situation. This is very good news. With that we turn to our Contributors for today, Eben and his partner, Karen Newell.

Idealism

Eben explains his worldview in the playlist below, including four clips (5:20). We won't attempt to summarize his worldview in detail because no one can do it better than he can. Some might classify his worldview in a general, almost miscellaneous category as New Age. We are not doing this; we fully recognize having read most of Eben's writing that his worldview is as informed as any can be. Since his NDE, Eben has done extensive scientific, social science, philosophical, and theological research across the worldview spectrum and has decided to refer to his own worldview as Idealism.

In David Naugle's authoritative book, *Worldview: The History of a Concept* (2002), Dr. Naugle describes idealism as squarely in the Western tradition with a long history (beginning long before the creation of the word itself). He mentions a fundamental division in Western worldview classification between idealism and realism, where idealism stresses the emergence of consciousness over time from the stickiness of life.

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Life is a process or journey. Idealists argue reason's important categories of knowledge emerge from the mind itself or from a consciousness beyond individual mind, and realists argue knowledge derives from experiential encounters with an outside world or worlds.

Eben offers his own definition of idealism in a detailed explanation of his worldview and worldview journey, *Living in a Mindful Universe: A Neurosurgeon's Journey into the Heart of Consciousness* (2017):

> Idealism is the notion that reality (our entire universe) is fundamentally a form of thought in which the human mind participates. Existence thus emerges from the realm of ideas, or from the mental (out of consciousness itself). Metaphysical idealism can also be called ontological idealism – ontological simply refers to "all that is." Metaphysical idealism exists at the other extreme from the conventional materialist position, that of "brain creates mind." (page 59)
>
> https://youtu.be/E105dQMNxH4?list=PLyw1QeCoiMB68Fdq3M4Weuz_1gKn7ucBl

Strands of idealism have flowed in the West since earliest ancient times, notably from Plato to gnosticism to Neo-Platonism, and they reemerged periodically during the Middle Ages through both mysticism and hardcore philosophical discourse. A list of notables who engaged in idealist thinking cited in Naugle's worldview book mentioned above include: Anaxagoras, Socrates, Plato, Aristotle, Cicero, Christian apologists and Church Fathers, Duns Scotus, Descartes, Spinoza, Kant, Hegel, Jacobi, Maine de Biran, Bergson, other French thinkers, and German and American transcendentalists, notably Schiller.

As you can see, if you have knowledge of some of these various theologians and philosophers (and we've left off from the list several notables), again: Worldview thinking does not always lend itself to categorization, producing bold, bright lines.

We should note that Eben and Karen (below) both grew up in Christian families and continue to have a favorable view of Christianity. Eben expresses this well on his website. This is an interesting read. Indeed, idealist thinking is solidly incorporated into many versions of Christianty, and we have noted several in the past. As examples, there are strong elements of idealism in process theology, Christian pantheism, and Christian Science.

Karen outlines her spiritual journey to Praxis Circle in her Full Interview, and we have summarized it in a playlist below, including 4 clips (7:90). She did not accept Christian teaching as a young girl, and an important adult in her life gave her to permission to pursue her own spiritual journey.

In the playlist, Karen explains how she did this and makes clear that she sees her own worldview as Western-based and different from apparently similar Eastern approaches. She also suggests that ones spiritual methodology greatly influences connection to ultimate consciousness. Eben and Karen pursue a practice that invokes a direct connection to mindfulness disciplines that are today gaining significant influence across America.

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https://youtu.be/EOqFzB-o-KQ?list=PLyw1QeCoiMB6-sz-9yHLDoiYSvgH6Vlu4

Conclusion

In summary, idealism or spiritualism recognizes individual consciousness and its connection to a greater consciousness that manifests in the reality we all can agree to, as well as a reality Eben, Karen, and billions of others have experienced in the beyond (through prayer, meditation, or countless other ways). Many idealists see life as a journey from here to there with ever increasing awareness, connection, and love. They encourage us to begin the journey right now for the good of all. Many of our other PC contributors have strong spiritual interests similar to Eben and Karen, such as Julia Burns, May-Lily Lee, and Jay Ford (though we don't know their worldviews well enough to say for sure).

There are many routes available to us Dorothys, and the roads we choose appear to have varying advantages and disadvantages. Considerations include: Do we emphasize this world or the unseen, and how do we do that? Most want to do what is true, and the search for truth might define the journey. Is there a connection between what is true and what seems a good idea? How do we know what is good? Again, these are critical issues because the route chosen produces varying personal, social, and political consequences.

In studying worldview, it is important to remember that, while truth probably does give us objective standards (that's Praxis Circle's worldview), one's barbarian enemy is another person's tribal father or mother; one's terrorist is often another's freedom fighter; and one's dogma can be another person's highly considered worldview.

Who is to say what worldview is correct?

You, that's who. Whatever the case, the nature of life dictates we must play the worldview game, judge, and decide as we go. Just ask Dorothy, the Scarecrow, the Tin Man, the Lion, the Wizard, the Munchkins, the Wicked Witch (R.I.P.), her guards, and even the flying monkeys.

Our lives depend on it. This is the nature of praxis, and the circle we inhabit together.

If you have a continued interest in Eben's and Karen's spiritual journey, please see the video below, *Proof Of Heaven in the Hear and Now*, hosted by May-Lily Lee, again, another Praxis Circle Contributor.

https://youtu.be/KkZGKfn15Pg?list=TLGG6hNeeKEij7MyMzAzMjAyMg

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