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Today's Worldview Jungle

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https://youtu.be/4D150GJQOa4

Dr. Guinness's Personal Page

Do you feel like America's going crazy? Experiencing worldview wars? Do you feel increasingly nuts yourself?

We do. Quite frankly, it's a jungle out there. We've never seen anything this wacko in our Boomer lifetimes. Today makes the 1960's look like the 1950's. We need to regain sanity, or at least take a few baby steps in the right direction.

In our opinion, the only way to do this? Return to worldview fundamentals. That's the subject for today's post, our first **Worldview Annual Report**. We're also recognizing the two year anniversary of our blog.

Without any further ado, then, we begin the second half of our calendar blogging year by recommending two excerpts from books authored by two of America's leading worldview experts, David Naugle and James Sire. We use these excerpts in our Praxis Circle Courses.

First, read this (authored by David Naugle, Tawa Anderson, and Michael Clark):

What Is Worldview?

Next, read this (by James Sire):

Naming the Elephant

It won't take long. In fact, these short, tight write-ups are worth reading multiple times. Dr. Naugle is perhaps the leading expert on the history of worldview as an academic discipline, and Dr. Sire is a leader in popularizing worldview thinking since the 1970's.

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Somehow appropriate for today, Naugle's *What is Worldview?* begins on the African Serengeti with three persons having a conversation about the beauty of African wildlife. One is a theist, the second a naturalist, and the third a pantheist. These three worldview categories cover the "lion's share" (no pun intended) of worldviews around the globe.

The term worldview always needs definition in context. While there are easily thousands if not millions of global "worldviews," there are approximately seven basic worldview categories (just to pick a number).

What is Worldview? demonstrates how worldview influences our perception of reality, and it moves from there to a discussion of the famous Blue Pill – Red Pill scene in *The Matrix*. It ends with a short history of the term worldview itself. As we've pointed out in the past and as we present on our website, there are many useful definitions; one must approach the worldview elephant from many directions to understand its essence.

Next, Sire's *Camel, Kangaroo, and Elephant* starts with a story of a father talking to his son about what holds up the world. It also ends with a definition of worldview, but accomplishes this with a slightly longer presentation of seven fundamental questions that most worldviews answer.

What is a worldview? Our definition? A narrative that answers life's most important questions.

If we are right that everyone has a worldview, then no one can avoid "playing" Aristotle or Augustine. In other words, each of us is a philosopher and a theologian. Even Henry the Home Ruler, our dog. Most animals use analytical and practical reason, and all humans are forced to take a position on the supernatural. As a result, each of us operates on the worldview chessboard, even peasants from the Dark Ages operating in an anarcho-syndicalist commune.

To a great extent, this is what Os Guinness, the "Father of Praxis Circle" is saying in the video above.

At the risk of being too binary, if life's most important questions don't get your attention, you're probably at risk in one or more of three ways: Your lights are on with nobody home, you're out there driving while asleep at the wheel, or you don't know where you are going – which is nice – because any road will take you there.

Clearly, in the worldview game, you need to decide: It's always your move.

To get even more granular about the worldview subject: Worldview thinking is much about word definition, word association, and language structure. It determines how humans use "reason" through language to communicate about reality, if any, and to achieve desires and goals from large-to-small. We believe that other key words when it comes to understanding worldview are "narrative, presupposition, faith, trust, truth, foundation, default, and meaning."

Furthermore, we believe the first two words, narrative and presupposition, like reason, emotion, and language, are universal across the human spectrum. The last six words, however – faith, trust, truth, foundation, default, and meaning – on the other hand, while being also universal and unavoidable in any worldview thinking, increasingly become functions of opinion, belief, and choice as we age or mature.

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Without a doubt, worldview thinking increases in most lives as we approach old age and death, and the sooner we get to a good worldview we like, the better are life's results.

Our premise is that if you don't find a solid foundation with meaning in your life, you will not flourish, be fulfilled, feel actualized, be happy; whatever you want to call it, but you know what we mean. Our theory is that a lot of the "craziness" we're seeing today occurs in those who don't have a solid worldview foundation or who don't have much meaning in their life or who are mistaken about what they place their faith in. We can debate the reasons and will continue to do so, and vigorously.

The God-man who proclaimed he was born to bear witness to the truth (John 18:37) ends perhaps the most influential speech to all of Western civilization, the Sermon on the Mount (Matthew 5 – 7), with these words:

Every one then who hears these words of mine and does them will be like the wise man who built his house upon the rock; and the rain fell, and the floods came, and the winds blew, and beat upon that house, but it did not fall, because it had been founded upon the rock. And everyone who hears these words of mine and does not do them will be like the foolish man who built his house upon the sand; and the rain fell, and the floods came, and the winds blew and beat against that house, and it fell; and great was the fall of it. (Matthew 7: 24 – 27)

We are told the crowds were astonished at his teaching, and few today anywhere question whether Jesus was a wise person. So, the question for each of us is:

What is my foundation?

The facts are that all three of the worldviews presented in Naugle's opening scene on the Serengeti have offered millions foundations sufficient to produce extremely fulfilled lives. Increasingly, people are even mixing and matching worldviews "as needed" to fit the situation, though we wonder whether this practice can offer a sufficient foundation for long-term happiness for any large community.

There is also no question: All three of the fundamental worldviews Naugle describes conflict in serious ways. Of course, there are even plenty of conflicts or contradictions within each of the three major worldview categories themselves, be it theism, naturalism, or pantheism.

Regardless, you began your worldview journey by virtue of being alive, and it's up to you to make it meaningful. As they say, again, "the game must be played." We make HUGE worldview choices for those most dear to us: our children. We have a duty to them to offer a worldview that's worth living with as they mature. Our duty to family and friends here never goes away, though it can shift significantly with time and circumstance.

Again, it's up to you.

But to get where we want to be, to get to meaning and satisfaction, we are going to have to experience reason, emotion, feelings, communication, many other people, faith, trust (or not), and truth to find one or more foundations. Only solid foundations can offer sanity, peace, and even love.

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In sum, the Praxis Circle Community is in the process of creating a non-profit organization that can help provide that. If you've read the two excerpts above, we are grateful and are also happy for you; we hope they are helpful for starters.

Now, the really "Good News": You have completed your suggested work for the day. Beyond that, we look forward to the rest of 2020 and to 2021 when we will have new blogs, courses, and other events to share.

The remainder of this post offers more context on the readings above and relates them to relevant material we've produced in the past. Finally, at the bottom we offer a new book suggestion for those who might be struggling between theism, naturalism, and pantheism.

To be direct: That might include most of us who value honesty in themselves, their relationships, and in their foundational worldview.

We begin this overview of our worldview blogging, including further development of the two readings linked above, with a clip below from our interview with Sir Roger Scruton. The purpose of this clip is to highlight that every worldview should not have a "rigid" foundation. Foundations should be fluid and involve input from others.

https://youtu.be/vu7V9scNWck

Of course, as a professional analytical philosopher, Sir Roger engaged in dialectical argument for a living. In other words, he swam in a world of point-counter point, which is the only way conscious reason operates, beyond rudimentary sensory processing.

So, yes, some people's worldview seems random (and we're sure you know a few!) – which is, on a basis, a worldview in itself.

On the other hand, Sir Roger does emphasize that all worldviews have some relation either to consensus or objective reality, which we all recognize, darn it, even if we won't admit it. (That last comment about reality is ours, and similar comments assuming its existence continue below.)

In our prior blogs we have emphasized the importance of narrative (see the MacIntyre quote in the middle of this post) or story (see the mention of Robert McKee's book, *Story*). Please note that the readings about worldview we highlight at top both center around storytelling.

The reason Naugle and Sire do this and the reason we feel narrative or story is so critical to worldview is that Alasdair MacIntyre is correct: Human reason and language only exist through story. Noun-verb-object, etc, along with more sentences and paragraphs or pictures and

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sounds. Your life is a "real" story (on some basis) that's largely constructed through your worldview, as it adapts, matures, and sometimes changes through the praxis process over time.

Our blogs have described worldview through several series. (We will link you below only to the first post in each series):

What is a Worldview? Three Part Blog Series

Who has a Worldview? Two Part Series

Why is Worldview Study Controversial? Two Part Series

Worldview and Belief Two Part Series

In the Western Judeo-Christian worldview, the relation between God and man is critical and is often summarized in the word Grace. We touch lightly on this topic from a rather secular perspective:

God is Gracious Three Part Series

During the 20th century, the Fall of the Berlin Wall (1989) had a profound effect through the praxis process on Western worldview, so we feature its anniversary. The knowledge gained then is even more relevant today, but it's deliberately being falsified or hidden:

The Next 105 Years – Liberty or Death Three Part Series

We believe Jonathan Haidt's work on the underpinnings of political views are critical to understanding your own worldview and the worldviews of others and to bridging divides, so we feature Dr. Haidt:

Good Evil Three Part Series

Within a still predominantly Christian West, we believe to understand the worldviews of others it's most important to have at least a rudimentary knowledge of applied Marxism, a comprehensive and extremely popular naturalist worldview. As a result, we feature a series of five blogs on Marxism and the Russian Revolution of 1917. Here, we link you to the first of these blogs and then to the fifth in the series, which links near the bottom to the prior four:

A Journey Five Part Series

A Brooklyn Dodger

We have begun an ongoing commentary on all three of the main worldview categories illustrated in Naugle's story – theism, naturalism, and pantheism – from the perspective of our own rather orthodox Christian worldview in many other miscellaneous but no less important ways.

We have already featured the classic Blue Pill – Red Pill scene from *The Matrix* mentioned by Naugle because it encapsulates so much of Western philosophy and theology in just one scene, as does the first scene of the movie Shane. There are many examples in cinema, and we will

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continue to feature them due to their sheer simplicity and beauty – from kitsch and comedy to the highest form of cinematic art.

All are familiar with how *The Matrix* illustrates our modern-day threshold problem of knowledge: How do we know what we experience is real and not manipulated by God, Descartes' evil genius, or the Architect? We have presented Contributors who believe all is consciousness, all is material, and reality is both spiritual and material. These Contributors are just examples of the kind of Expert and Member diversity we will pursue in the future.

The other big theme *The Matrix* scene emphasizes is the importance of free will as perhaps the central idea of Western civilization – meaning Western philosophy, society, and life. We believe in a whole host of ways that this is a direct function of the centrality of Classical Judeo-Christianity (CJC) to the West. In addition, we believe that freedom will continue to decline in the West if CJC continues to fade as the West's foundational worldview.

Of course, Neo in The Matrix's Blue Pill – Red Pill scene chooses the red pill, which means he follows "reality" all the way to the end of the three-movie series. As a result, he experiences much risk, danger, fighting, pain, and suffering, as well as joy – the audience believes all for the love of Trinity. (Well, of course he loves Trinity and its mutual! Whether real or unreal, it still gets quite hot, thank Goodness, in the Matrix.)

We see this same theme in countless ways across all of Western literature, drama, and cinema.

While it's a wonderful dramatic portrayal, no human being is fortunate enough to be given that grand choice of experiencing heavenly bliss or earthly life on the front end of his or her own life; we're all born into a life of suffering and joy. Instead, we need to learn to deal with it and move forward.

Well, all of our billions of ancestors have done this. We're nothing special.

But it's the choices we make for the sake of others that most often result in the most meaning in our lives. If a theist, maybe it's, therefore, understandable why one might chose a god who has suffered with us – and arguably continues to do so. It makes really good sense, you know, and things that make good sense are often true.

And some even see that as worldview reality.

One of the points we've tried to make is that we're doing the preliminary work concerning worldview for you, so that you can understand faster and build your own with greater ease, if that's your interest. We also have a terrific and long-developed window on some of the people and non-profit think-tanks who lead in this area. We think it's hard to find such an organization on Main Street, USA.

We have shown you a small sample (see the photo below Dr. Mathewes' video) of the books written directly on the worldview subject alone that we've absorbed. It's just a small sample – in fact, we'll be ordering four more to stack on the that pile after finishing this post. We have many sub-piles of worldview-related books not shown there. We keep our library up-to-date.

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In any case, again, James Sire might be the most popular author with the longest standing on the worldview subject today, and the second reading above, *Camel, Kangaroo, and Elephant*, is taken from his recent book, *Naming the Elephant* (2015). It updates his ground-breaking popular book from 1977, *The Universe Next Door*.

And again, the Sire excerpt linked above begins with a father-son story about the importance of presuppositions in worldview, dealing with the ends of human knowledge, logic, and reason. He then goes on to define worldview by framing the topic around seven questions. We will not list the full questions for you here, but you should know that such a list of questions can be much longer. You can examine our Resources page to get a better feel for this. In particular, see the Diagrams/Chart page.

What we will do for you here on the Sire reading, however, is match the seven Sire worldview questions he presents with a short word or phrase that might represent each question he's asking. We would describe his seven categories this way: God/Truth/Reality, World, Person, After Death, Knowledge/Consciousness, Morality, and Meaning.

While these word categories define worldview for Sire, we encourage you to try to define your own worldview categories. We are doing that ourselves.

We began to do this in our April 22, 2020 post and completed it on May 12, 2020. The result is the chart that you see at the very bottom below.

We deliberately did not choose the same categories as Sire for our own reasons. Rather than theism, atheism-naturalism, and pantheism as column categories, for example, we selected the corresponding lesser known categories dualism, matterism, and mindism. Similarly, we chose eight row categories (corresponding to Sire's seven questions) and chose these words (in descending order): Truth, God, Miracles, Space/Time, World, Human Being, Morality, and Governance. Again, we made these choices consciously because they are more representative and descriptive for our own purposes, based on our personal experience and the reading we have done.

Our worldview scheme uses some of the same words as Sire – God, Truth, World, Person-Human Being, and Morality, but we do not include as separate categories Reality, After Death, Knowledge/Consciousness, and Meaning. Instead, we would include all of these "Sire words" (that appear to be missing in our scheme) as sub-categories to our meta-categories, with the exception of Meaning.

We chose to leave out Meaning altogether because we believe that's one of the main points of any worldview narrative – like love, joy, peace, happiness, satisfaction, etc. It might fit under our category Human Being, but we are not sure all of Maslow's needs in the needs hierarchy need to have their own category. This might change, but you see how all of this can work.

Lastly, we added the category Governance because we believe how people orient in community is fundamental to Western philosophy. There are philosophy's three great questions: What can we know, how can we live good lives, and how should we govern ourselves? With at least 5,000 years now of recorded history, we have lots of great data on this subject. Good governance is one of the primary ways humans through praxis produce fulfillment or happiness in their lives as individuals and in groups.

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In his short write up above, Dr. Sire emphasizes there is much flexibility in settling on our most important questions and worldview foundation, and we're sure we could have quite a lively discussion with him here. Maybe we will do that one day.

To finish on our own worldview design creation, you will see why we've chosen our particular categories as our blog continues, but we trust now you get the types of issues you'll encounter in any detailed worldview construction. We think this is a fun and helpful exercise to undertake, and, again, the scheme will change as time moves on.

Of course, one doesn't need a complex worldview. Most people have one but might not be in touch with it. One PC Member said his worldview is "do the right thing;" Another said his is "don't piss people off." Still another senior PC Expert and emeritus member of a renowned university faculty even said he didn't have one. (Please note he's spending much of his life studying it.)

So, while determining your worldview can be difficult, admitting it beyond consenting adults is risky. Who knows? Maybe it's good to keep your enemies guessing. In sum, however, we want to get many more opinions . . . particularly yours.

To begin wrapping up this new season post, we want to come back to the importance of having a foundation for your worldview. Certainly, many people will argue that it's quite possible for humans to function well in a random or chaotic way. Popular worldview commentators like Jordan Peterson argue that most of the ancient stories reflect timeless human experience in bringing order from nature's chaos and that the pinnacle of human and divine creativity may be found on the borderline between these two states.

Nonetheless, we believe human beings must have a heavy dose of worldview order in their lives, or they risk their sanity or at least not achieving important goals.

But to qualify this statement just a bit, what worldview tempered by practical reason might just do for us is create a whole slew of *default positions* that shape our thinking and behavior that are then subject to change, based on situation or circumstance. At times, many worldview rules can and should be broken. Just like there is often a wide spectrum for each virtuous action between two vices, requiring prudent judgement for proper navigation. As mentioned in prior posts, prudence is often recognized as the key virtue among the top seven, with surprisingly little correlation with intelligence. Similarly, maybe prudence is also needed to choose the best conscious default positions available.

In any case, what our worldviews might do best is help us see more clearly reality that we wouldn't otherwise see and help us react quickly by default in good ways when we don't have much time to reflect. In real life and in the movies, this happens constantly, especially when the stakes are very high. In fact, "good defaults" work pretty well, or we humans wouldn't have made it alive over the last maybe 250,000 years.

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To end, we'd like to recommend a terrific, relatively new book. Our recommendation applies no matter what your worldview is, as you gaze out over the Serengeti, or which worldview pill you would swallow, while trapped in your own Matrix. It is Lee Strobel's *The Case for Miracles: A Journalist Investigates Evidence for the Supernatural* (2018). In 2017 a movie premiered about Strobel's life, and we have featured other stories of miracles and similar books written by other authors, like Eric Metaxas.

We believe that secondary accounts of the supernatural or miracles as in the Bible are important, but we also believe that most people believe in such things more as the result of what they experience in their own lives. Strobel presents a broad survey of miracles well and objectively from all perspectives – believer-to-unbeliever or to supreme skeptic. By necessity since it's such a broad subject, he limits the inquiry primarily to health and science, but he does a masterful job in the space provided. Metaxas makes our point well that human experience of the supernatural is common because he limits his book only to those people he knew from personal experience.

We believe our militantly secular culture today actively suppresses discussion of supernatural experience, and we want to give that more of a platform here.

Strobel's book offers both theists and atheists hope and possible satisfaction, and he establishes a respectful dialogue among them. We found the book well supported by the vast quantity of similar reading we've done over the years.

We argue that what we call "faith" is actually based solidly on reason and evidence – whatever your faith might be – and that this has been the case for all of recorded history.

Finally, after finishing Strobel's book, we would be curious to know in which category you would find yourself and why:

- I don't have enough faith to believe in God,
- I don't have enough faith to be an atheist.

Whatever the case, only a brilliant God or brilliant human beings (or both) could have created Strobel's set of amazing facts.

We'll be back in touch soon.

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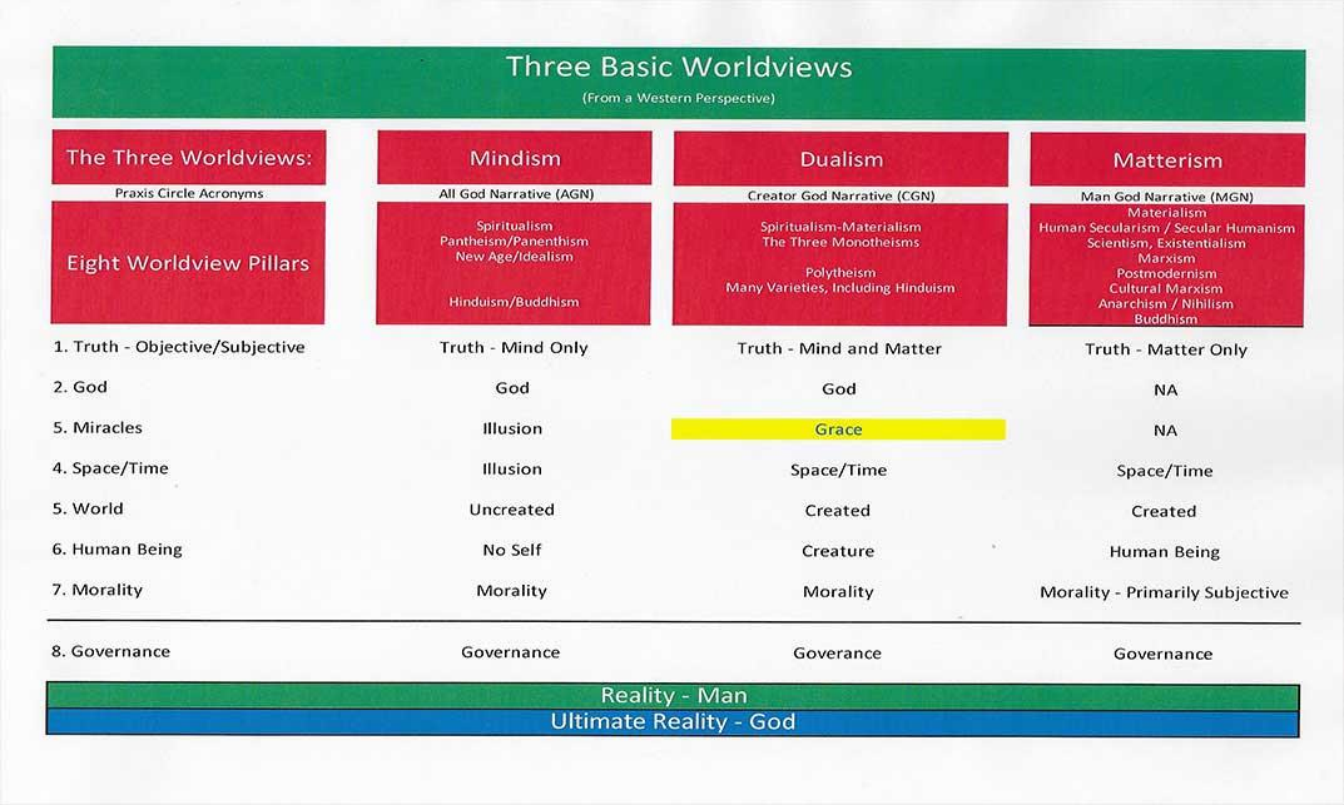

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