

Andrews University
School of Education

WORLDVIEW SYNTHESIS

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EDFN: 500 - Philosophical Foundations for Professionals

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By

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Analysis of Personal Worldview

Through a series of personal experiences, I have discovered how my worldview has continuously influenced my growth and development in various aspects of my life. In the early years of my development, I had a narrow perspective in terms of my existence and the world at large. As I knew and understood it, others perceived the world and the universe as I did- through a simplistic perspective that could easily rationalize right from wrong and acknowledged God as the ultimate source of perfection. In time, I discovered that my thoughts, although widely accepted and recognized as a worldview, were different than others'. I have been in a continuous quest for knowledge as I gradually learn and discover various aspects of my worldview that solidify my belief in God as the Creator and all-powerful being I believe Him to be.

My Christian theistic worldview provides me with the foundation from which my character, actions, and thoughts are formed. Through God's written Word, I have been provided with a roadmap and guide to live a meaningful life. In the first chapter of Genesis, the Bible states that God's creation of the world and human kind was perfect, and we were created in His likeness (verse 27, NIV). He created us with the ability to make our own decisions and be caretakers of the earth. Through the poor choices of our forefathers, Adam and Eve, iniquity tainted this perfection. Sin separated us from God (Isaiah 59:2). Because of the freedom of choice God has given all of us, He could not interfere with their chosen path for humanity. However, in His mercy and grace, He devised a plan for redemption through the sacrifice of His Son- Jesus Christ (Romans 5:8). This plan would be used to give us hope of a better life beyond the present, and show Jesus as the way, the truth, and the life (John 14:6).

Rationale for Chosen Worldview

I believe it is critical for individuals to undergo a process of self-examination that will allow them to determine their own belief system in order to live a purposeful life. I believe it is equally important to test that belief system against itself and others to better understand one's role, or lack thereof, in life. It is this very rationale that dictates who we are fundamentally. Upon exploring the various worldviews in existence, I have yet to find one other than Christian theism that fully answers my questions pertaining to the meaning of life, ethics, existence, and life after death. In testing other worldviews, I cannot accept what they offer. Pantheism, for example, offers that human beings are creators of their own destinies, and all paths lead to a divine existence in which we are one with god (Sire, 2009, p. 149-156). New Age offers that we are also the creators of our destiny and that souls are eternal (Sire, 2009, p. 195). Under the umbrella of New Age, there is no truth since truth is subjective to individual experiences and evil does not exist because a moral compass cannot be dictated as the correct path.

Conversely, Christian theism acknowledges evil and the pain and suffering we experience as a result of sin. Through this acknowledgement, the plan of salvation makes sense to me. In my youth, I could not understand the concept of redemption through the sacrifice of God's son- Jesus Christ. Through careful study of the Word, I understood that in God's perfection and justice, sin would have to be counteracted through the sacrifice of His Son's life (Romans 3:25, NIV). This great sacrifice proved that although God's law does not change, His love and mercy are just as abundantly available to humankind if they so choose. For our sinful actions, the antidote was the sacrifice of a perfect life- the one Jesus lived while on earth to not only redeem fallen humanity, but also serve as an example of how we should lead our lives and treat others. My worldview caters to my needs in my quest for a meaningful life, my existence, and life after death.

Strengths and Challenges of the Chosen Worldview

The strengths of this worldview lie in its foundation as God's omniscience and omnipresence. The Bible is His written word on earth, which provides the moral and ethical code by which Christians live and outlines what is considered right and wrong. In addition, this worldview accounts for creation by intelligent design by God, contrary to the proposed theorists of nature such as evolution and existence by chance. This personal God is exemplified from creation through the hope of eternal life. In addition, Christian theism provides meaning to past events and history, all events leading to man's ultimate path of eternal life or death. In this regard, the philosophical foundations of this worldview are sustained and substantiated in that it proves itself to be consistent.

Conversely, some of the challenges surrounding Christian Theism are more difficult to discredit. The major challenge is that Christian theism requires faith in the existence of God, since God's existence cannot be physically proven. In addition, the premise that God is omniscient and the Creator of all things inadvertently makes Him the creator of evil- a direct contradiction to the loving image of God. Under the same premise, if God is all knowing, it leaves many to question His reason for creating humanity if He knew they would taint His perfect creation. There are also inconsistencies that can be presented pertaining to God's loving nature. In the Old Testament, we find stories of mass killings ordered by God Himself, including women, children, and even animals of entire cities (1 Samuel 15:2-3, NIV). These examples are not characteristic of the same loving Father Christians portray- the God who gave up His Son to atone the sins of the world. For non-believers, this is problematic in numerous ways when read

out of context. However, these are some of the challenges Christian theists have in providing meaning to the nature of God.

Development and Strengthening of Chosen Worldview

The development and strengthening of my chosen worldview will depend heavily on seeking the Lord earnestly and whole-heartedly. God acknowledges that our sinful nature has interfered with our ability to gravitate towards Him, and it is every believer's struggle. Because I understand this, developing my faith will require careful study of the Bible and continuously seeking ways to stay connected through prayer. In addition, service to others will contribute to this growth and development. As Jesus stated in James 1:27 (NIV), engaging in taking care of others are critical components of true religion. Therefore, not only will I engage in having a personal relationship with God, but also do right by others and seek ways to bring others to Christ. It is through this combination of faith and works that I will get closer to God and acquire salvation. Another way to strengthen my faith is testing God's promises, while acknowledging answered prayers and sharing those testimonies with others.

Through careful study of the Bible, congregating with fellow believers, and getting involved in my community I can strengthen and develop my worldview. Through my service, I can exemplify the religion Jesus deems righteous, and spark others' interest in my faith. By interacting with others and demonstrating God's love, I am in a continuous process of renewal and strengthening in my beliefs as I see God working in others and myself. In addition, I will continue to keep an open mind that can objectively examine other worldviews, while seeking ways to test those and my own beliefs against themselves for consistency and truth. By understanding others and exploring the questions I have pertaining to other faiths, I can strengthen my belief by exploring those very questions of my own worldview. This will not only

help me solidify what I understand to be the truth, but help me answer questions for others seeking understanding and knowledge of my worldview.

Implications for Education and Professional Life

As a Christian, the implications of my worldview on education and my professional life are interchangeable and made evident daily. Consistent with Ellen G. White's writings on education (White, 1952, p. 13), I believe the focus of education is to not only develop children into rational thinkers, but also prepare them for eternal life. Of course, the latter is often more difficult when working in a secular school system. As an educational professional, the concept of developing individuals to be rational thinkers is consistent with the freedom of choice God grants us. I view my profession as a calling in which God is entrusting me with preparing the minds of individuals to live a life that is pleasing in His eyes, but also provide them with the tools to voluntarily give Him their hearts. This can be accomplished by teaching them how to seek knowledge and truth, and learning to test ideas and challenge them.

Through my interactions with the students I work with, I do not necessarily have to preach my faith and beliefs to them verbally, but can be just as influential by leading by example. Students are learners actively processing and often adapting to what they perceive. Although I cannot explicitly discuss my faith with them, I can demonstrate God's love in my service to them. By learning to appreciate their differences, I can effectively lead them to acquiring a life-changing education. As an educator, it is my duty to treat all students as children of God, remembering that they were all made in His image and are temples of His Holy Spirit. Because I work more closely with students at the college level, it is my hope that I can guide them into a life of service to contribute to the well-being of others rather than for selfish gain.

Implications for Diversity

Working in a secular educational setting, it is critical for me to understand and respect various worldviews and belief systems. As an educator, I am exposed to various ethnic groups, religions, preferences, and cultures. With that diversity comes a diversification of opinions in terms of what is considered the truth as well as morally acceptable. With time, I have learned that those very differences have helped shape the way I perceive the world around me, as well as my relationship with God. Under that premise, I must consider how others' experiences have shaped their beliefs and understandings and be mindful how my interactions with others can be perceived. In the Bible, we read of various examples in which God interacted with individuals from different walks of life, always ensuring to speak to that person in a way they could understand. This is a prime example of the humility we must have in interacting with those different than us.

Through the understanding of these differences, I believe learners understand how to value themselves for their individuality, but also value the individuality of others and the importance of such in achieving success. This diversity can teach the importance of collaboration, since our uniqueness has gifted us with different talents. This shapes the way learners view themselves- not only as beneficiaries, but also contributors to the success of others.

As a Christian, I find that my appreciation for diversity is founded in God's encompassing love that is extended to all who are willing to receive it. In addition to the diversity of cultures, individuals, languages, ethnicities, and races, we can see God's appreciation for diversity through nature. From the various animal species, plants, colors, among others, we find God's appreciation for uniqueness as well as creativity. Similarly, we should treat those that are different than us with appreciation as they are part of God's creation.

References

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