Worldview Boutique

Some key points from James Sire’s

_The Universe Next Door_
Why this book?

- Outline basic worldviews that underlie the way we think
- Trace historically how these worldviews developed
- Show postmodernism’s twist
- Understand ourselves and others so we can genuinely communicate
"A world view is a set of presuppositions (assumptions which may be true, partially true or entirely false) which we hold (consciously or subconsciously, consistently or inconsistently) about the basic make-up of our world." -- Sire
Worldview: An iceberg analogy
What a worldview does . . .

One’s worldview determines how the events and circumstances of life will be understood . . . accepted . . . and acted upon.
Sire’s 8 questions

- What is prime reality?
- What is the nature of external reality, the world around us?
- What is a human being?
- What happens at death?
- Why is it possible to know anything?
- How do we know what is right and wrong?
- What is meaning of human history?
- What personal, life-orienting core commitments are consistent with this worldview?
How important are religious beliefs to one’s world view?

“...Theology is not simply a system of beliefs to be added alongside the others. Theology is the master blueprint on which all other blueprints are mapped”

-- Paul Hiebert, missionary anthropologist
Christian Theism
Subtitle: A universe charged with the grandeur of God

- Knowledge, death, reality, ethics, history, and the realness of human beings are all focused on God.
I see you! You'd better not throw that! Santa Claus is watching you right now!
Deism
Sire’s subtitle: The clockwork universe

- Timeline: 1500

- God
  - is distant:
    - an intellect to be recognized
    - not a person to be worshipped
  - is an architect; not a lover or judge

- Cosmos is not fallen or abnormal

John Locke, Buckmeister Fuller, Voltaire, Albert Einstein
The cosmos in Deism

- Cosmos is a closed, linear cause and effect system
  - “Clockwork universe” -- God simply left it to run on its own
  - God, as the First Cause, never intervenes
  - Miracles are not possible
Naturalism
Subtitle: The silence of finite space

- Timeline: 1630
- Dialectical materialism / secular humanism
- God is removed: history was self-activating
- Human personality is only an interrelation of chemical properties
- Values are manmade

Bertrand Russell, Astrophysicist Carl Sagan
Naturalism

“Free will as it is traditionally conceived …simply does not exist…. There is no way that the evolutionary process as it is currently conceived can produce a being that is truly free to make choices” – William Provine, naturalistic, atheistic biologist at Cornell University
Naturalism

- C.S. Lewis in his book *Miracles* – Naturalism is self-refuting because it is inconsistent with the validity of reasoning.
Nihilism
Sire’s subtitle: Zero point

- Timeline: 1870
- Extreme pessimism / skepticism
- Nothing has meaning, value, significance, dignity or worth
- Human beings are conscious machines with no ability to effect their destiny
- Human animal only invents values

B.F. Skinner
Existentialism
Subtitle: Beyond Nihilism

- Timeline: 1920
- Humanity is central: people make themselves who they are
- Knowledge is subjective
- No absolute moral values
- History is uncertain and even unimportant
- Supernatural is brushed aside
Existentialism - 2 flavors

- Atheistic
- Theistic
How existentialists view the Bible

Even the theistic version says that the Bible, though “religiously true,” is historically untrustworthy.

Tillich, Sartre, Camus
Journey to the East: Eastern Pantheistic Monism

- Many (if not all) roads lead to the One
- Ideas are not really important
- Time is unreal
- History is cyclical
- Desire to enter the undifferentiated One; in one sense, each person is God
A Separate Universe
Sire’s subtitle: The New Age – Spirituality Without Religion

- Timeline: 1965
- “Core” experience is cosmic consciousness
- No personal God; only a mysterious Force; no Lord of the Universe unless it be us
- Borrows heavily from animism

Actress Shirley McClaine
New Age and altered consciousness

- The invisible universe is accessible through altered states of consciousness
- Drugs used to enhance human consciousness
Postmodernism
Sire’s subtitle: The vanished horizon

- All stories equally valid
- Focus changes from *being* to *knowing*
- Paradoxically, reality is forever hidden
- Any story but my own is oppressive
- Social good = whatever society takes it to be at the moment
Postmodernism

The postmodernist stares blankly at any claims to truth and shrugs: “Okay if it works for you.”

“There are many kinds of truths and consequently, there is no truth” -- Nietzsche
Postmodernists and truth

- “Truth is what one’s peers let one get away with” -- Richard Rorty
- “Postmodern ethics inevitably slides in the direction of nihilism, holding that since nothing is really true, nothing is necessarily good” -- Gerard Reed
A View from the Middle East: Islamic Theism

- Emphasizes God’s oneness, transcendence and sovereignty
- Nothing happens in world outside of God’s divine decrees
- Devout Muslims strive to follow divine instructions in even the smallest part of life
Secularism
Secular people

- A topic not dealt with specifically in Sire
Secular people

- They live without a daily awareness of or reference to God and His church
- They think God and His people are irrelevant
- To them Christianity is boring and perhaps even untrue
Secular people

- They may look and sound religious . . . Their gods are things like money, sex, materialism, success, power, social acceptance or some philosophical system