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 the 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

12 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.
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