



Worldview Thinking

Revisiting the Fundamental Orientations of Our Minds and Hearts

Welcome!

In his book, *Life Together*, Dietrich Bonhoeffer reminds us that God's people are a scattered people, but that we are "held together solely in Jesus Christ." So, while we are separated from one another at this time in our history, we rejoice that we are able to meet via Zoom as a gift of His grace – nothing but grace. Coming together for our Sunday morning webinars is only one expression of our desire to be together and to learn how to "live by the truth of God's Word in Jesus Christ." We are glad you joined us this morning for Part 7 of our series on *Worldview Thinking*.



Introduction

Last week, I attempted to cover too much material in too little time. Or, to say it another way, I bit off more than I (or you) could chew. As a result, at least some of you were unable to process the concepts of analogical thinking, moral reasoning, logic, and epistemology as they related to worldview formation. After reflecting on how to rectify this situation, knowing how vitally important it is for all believers to understand these foundational concepts in order to build a Christian worldview, I made the decision to revisit last week's lecture – but at a slower pace and with (hopefully) better explanations. After all, we must be able to answer the second worldview question, “What is the nature of external reality?” before we can move forward on our journey.



Stephen Hawking

“We find ourselves in a bewildering world. We want to make sense of what we see around us and to ask: What is the nature of the universe? What is our place in it and where did it and we come from? Why is it the way it is?”

- Stephen W. Hawking, *A Brief History of Time*

“It is not necessary to invoke God to light the blue touch paper and set the universe going.”

- Stephen W. Hawking, *The Grand Design*



What Is Reality?

- How do we know that we are not just characters in a computer-generated soap opera? (think *The Matrix*).
- Have you ever wondered if a full moon could split in half?
- What would you say to a person who believed that everyone in the world on a diet would develop an uncontrollable craving for banana cream pie?
- Is there another reality behind a simulated one?
- Are we all figments of someone else's dream?
- Smiling? These are questions posed by Stephen Hawking.



David Hume

(1711-1776)

“Although we have no rational grounds for believing in an objective reality, we also have no choice but to act as if it is true.”

Alexander Stoddart's sculpture of the Scottish Enlightenment thinker David Hume in front of the High Court Building, Edinburgh. Erected in 1997.



Eight Essential Worldview Questions

Our Second Question: What Is the Nature of External Reality?



Eight Basic Worldview Questions

1

What Is Prime Reality –
the Really Real?

2

**What Is the Nature of
External Reality?**

3

What Is a Human Being?

4

What Happens to a
Person at Death?

5

Why Is It Possible to
Know Anything at All?

6

How Do We Know What
Is Right and Wrong?

7

What Is the Meaning of
Human History?

8

What Personal, Life-
Orienting Commitments Are
Consistent with This
Worldview?



Simplicity and Complexity in Worldview Thinking

- **Simplicity:** “A worldview is like an intellectual lens through which we see the world” (Bocchino and Geisler).
- **Complexity:** “So limited is human life that no man has time or opportunity to gather all the information relevant to a comprehensive worldview, and even if he could, volitional or emotional pressures upon the human spirit prejudice every man’s interpretation of the data. This best explains the fact that brilliant minds using the same canons of reason interpret reality in amazingly diverse ways, and expound competing views with compelling force” (Carl F.H. Henry).



The Scope of One's Worldview

- **Carl F.H. Henry:** “The Christian revelation concerns both the entirety and the minutiae of life and reality.”
- **James W. Sire:** “A worldview is the fundamental perspective from which one addresses every issue of life.”



How Do We Come To Know Anything?

- How do we gain information about the ultimately real world?
- Where does thinking begin?
- Do you “identify the structure of the real world with your own mental perceptions”? Have your perceptions ever been wrong?
- Do you believe that worldviews must have “certainty, consistency, and coherence?”
- How is it that a person comes to know, to perceive, to understand?
- What are the sources of our spiritual beliefs?
- What method or methods do we use for verification of our beliefs?



What do these men have to believe in order to sit on this skyscraper beam?



How Do We Come To Know Anything?

- Are our beliefs determined by subjective, personal preferences and opinions, or by revelation?
- Do we tend to judge situations and people through the lens of our own prejudices?
- Do we believe in supernatural divine self-disclosure, that God intervened in human history and spoke to man as man?
- Do we believe that God's self-revelation is contained in the language, statements, and propositions of the biblical text?
- What is the relationship between faith and knowledge?



Prerequisites For Knowledge

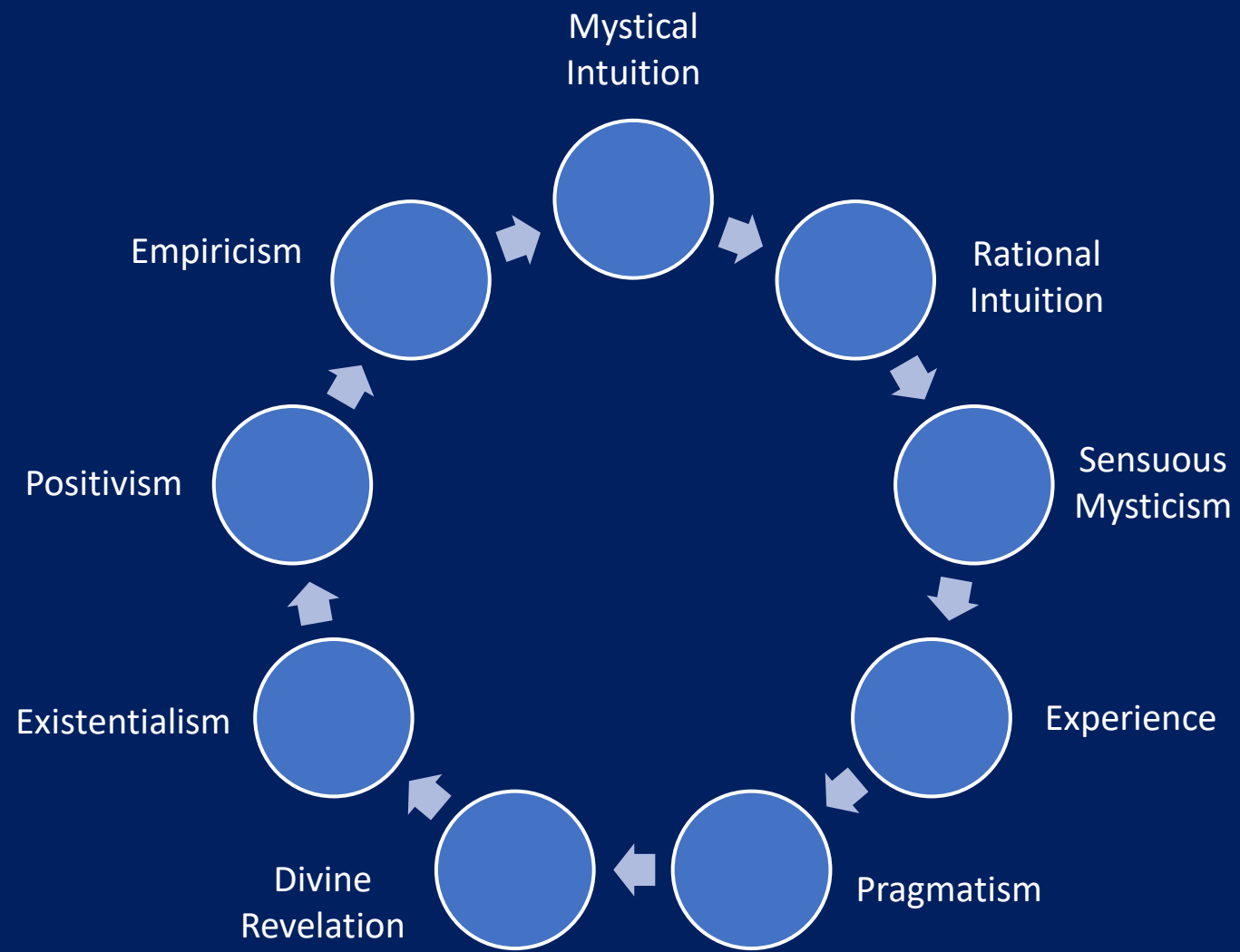
1. **The Validity of the Law of Non-Contradiction:** This is the foundation upon which all rationality is established. *A* cannot be *non-A* at the same time and in the same relationship. A thing cannot be square and not square at the same time and in the same relationship. Aristotle: “The same attribute cannot at the same time belong and not belong to the same subject in the same respect.”
2. **The Validity of the Law of Causality:** Every effect must have a cause.
3. **The Basic Reliability of Sense Perception:** How we acquire knowledge of the external world.



What Is the Nature of External Reality?

*How Would You Arrive At An
Answer To This Question?*







Mystical Intuition

- Intuition, or **immediate apprehension**, is claimed “to be found in one’s own inner experience as an instant awareness of the religious Ultimate.”
- “Religious mysticism depicts intuition as a way of knowing that contrasts with both reason and sensation, and therefore also with intelligible divine revelation.”
- “Mystics claim that **direct insight** into the invisible world is available through personal illumination as a means of access to the Divine allegedly transcending all ordinary levels of human experience.”
- The religious experience is **unverifiable** by ordinary ways of knowing.



Problems With Intuition

- This view requires the **suspension of reason**.
- If God is beyond truth, what criterion of truth and error remains?
- A “lapse in self-consciousness can only mean the surrender of any personal knowledge whatever.”
- The mystic is left with no ground for speech about God. Reality cannot be described when it is said to be inherently inexpressible.
- **Common expressions:** “I can feel God.” “It doesn’t matter what God’s Word says, I know this is right.” “I have a special feeling about what God wants me to do.” “God spoke to me about this last night.”



RATIONALISM is “the theory that all knowledge, and therefore all religious knowledge, can be deduced from logic alone, i.e., logic apart from both revelation and sensory experience” (Gordon Clark).



Rationalism

- “The rationalistic method of knowing considers human reasoning as the only reliable source of knowledge” (Henry).
- “The underlying assumption of philosophical rationalism is that the **mind of man** – simply in view of its latent potentialities, or veiled divinity, or the human mind’s explicit and direct continuity with the mind of God – **possesses an inherent potentiality for solving all intellectual problems.**”
- Rationalism means that “man in his present condition is able **by rational inquiry to arrive at the whole truth about reality and life.**”
- “Human reason is **not** a source of infallible truth about ultimate reality.”



Empiricism

- Empiricism espouses that all knowledge is based on sensation alone. Nothing can be more certain than what appears to our senses.
- The empiricists consider **sense observation** the source of all truth and knowledge. All truth is held to be derived from experience (*a posteriori*, lit., *from what comes after*; inductive reasoning).
- “The modern spirit has opted for empiricism as its way of knowing the externally real world, and the inevitable consequence of this decision is secularity.”
- “Taken by itself, the empirical method provides **no basis for affirming or denying supranatural realities**, since by definition it is a method for dealing only with perceptible realities.”



Nancy Pearcey on *Empiricism*

- “How can I be sure that **my senses** are telling me the truth?”
- “Empiricism ends by claiming that the only thing humans are capable of knowing is a **succession of sensations** – like a filmstrip running through our heads.” Ernst Mach (from whom we get the term “Mach 1” for the speed of sound) said, “The world consists only of sensations.”
- “Using sensory experience alone, there is **no way to build a bridge from internal mental images to the external world**. We are trapped in the prison house of our minds.”



Rational Intuition

- Scholars such as Augustine and Calvin made the case for *a priori* knowledge on the reality that man is the *imago Dei* (the image of God).
- This view of man is called **preformation** (e.g., “the categories of thought are aptitudes for thought implanted by the Creator and synchronized with the whole of created reality”).
- “God is the source of all truth, the human mind is an instrument for recognizing truth, and the rational awareness of God is given *a priori* (lit., *from what comes before*; deductive reasoning) in correlation with man’s self-awareness, so that man as a knower stands always in epistemic relationship with his Maker and Judge.”

John Frame

“Every philosophy must use its own standards in proving its conclusions; otherwise, it is simply inconsistent. Those who believe that human reason is the ultimate authority (**rationalists**) must presuppose the authority of reason in their arguments for rationalism. Those who believe in the ultimacy of sense experience must presuppose it in arguing for their philosophy (**empiricism**). And skeptics must be skeptical of their own skepticism.”





God's Self-Disclosure

- Divine Self-Disclosure: God has spoken.
- Self-revelation applies logic to premises given in revelation.
- “The human spirit slants its perspectives in a manner that does violence to the truth of revelation, while its very formulations are at the same time made possible because reason is a divine gift whose legitimate and proper use man has compromised” (Henry).
- “When divine revelation gets through, man has an ultimate and final word.”
- “Reliable knowledge...strenuously insists that reason is the test for truth. But by true knowledge it means nothing more or less than truth as God knows and reveals it...”



Two Ways To Reason

- **Autonomously:** From the Greek *auto* (self) + *nomos* (law) = **self-law**; “living under one’s own laws; independent” (Liddell and Scott’s Greek Lexicon). “Our own human powers are ultimate when we engage in the process of evaluation...Autonomy means making human judgment and human standards for judgment an ultimate touchstone in one’s life” (Vern Poythress).
- **The Christian Way:** “To listen submissively to the instruction of Jesus Christ, who is the Lord of the universe.” This is the way of submitting to divine revelation.
- Each person has to decide between the two. No one can remain neutral.

The Root of Human Thinking

“God is at the root of human thinking and mental reasoning. As human beings, we can think about logic. Our mental activity is another dimension to the character of logic. And again our minds have their roots in God’s mind. We are made in his image, and our thoughts imitate his thoughts. We think his thoughts after him. The coherence of logic with our minds rests on divine coherence. God’s logical consistency and his truthfulness cohere with his ability to think, and his thoughts are consistent....Human thinking is always derivative” (Vern Poythress).





Concluding Thoughts

1. Seek to “love the Lord your God with all your heart, and with all your soul, and with all your strength, and with all your mind” (Lk. 10:27).
2. Strive to think analogically. “By this is meant that God is the original and that man is the derivative. God has an absolute self-contained system within himself....Man must, to be sure, think God’s thoughts after him; but this means that he must, in seeking to form his own system, constantly be subject to the authority of God’s system *to the extent* that this is revealed to him” (Cornelius van Til). R.C. Sproul explains that analogical knowledge implies true but limited knowledge and takes into account the Creator’s infinity and human finitude.



Concluding Thoughts

3. Recognize that “only God can provide us with an eternal perspective and speak to us with absolute and final authority” (Sproul).
4. Do not reject the life of the mind – irrespective of the cost.
5. Pursue truth regardless of its implications.
6. Combine truth and obedience to the truth (knowing and doing, believing and obeying, theory and practice, orthodoxy and orthopraxy).
7. Be content with what you cannot know. “The secret things belong to the Lord our God, but the things that are revealed belong to us and to our children forever, that we may do all the words of this law” (Deut. 29:29).