

W.E.C #2

Worldview – Presuppositions of the Three Metaphysical Realities

Carl Sagan – the cosmos is all there is, all there was, and all there ever will be

Metaphysics

- The study of the ultimate nature of reality, the origin, structure, and nature of what is real.
- *meta* (“after, beyond”)
- *physika* (“physics, nature”).
 - It literally means “beyond the physical,” beyond the physical world of sense perception
- *What does it mean to exist?*
 - *What sorts of things exist?*
- *What is the nature of man?*
 - *Is he free? Good? Bad? Neutral?*
 - *An animal? Seeded? Evolved? Imagined?*
 - *Body? Soul? Both?*
- *What is the nature of the universe?*
 - *Is it objectively real?*
 - *Or is it simply appearance?*
- *Does God exist?*
 - *What is His nature?*
 - *What is God’s relation to the universe?*
- *Is there change or development?*
 - *How do things change?*
 - *How is development possible?*
- *What is the character of the laws or concepts that govern reality?*
 - *Are they changing?*
 - *Universal?*
 - *What are the limits of possibility?*
- *Why is something there rather than nothing there?*
- *Why are things the way they are?*
- *Are we alone in the universe?*

We cannot escape reality (metaphysics)

- We are bound to it
- We cannot escape it
- We live / we die / we all find ourselves on the same planet in the same human bodies
- For this reason—we must understand 4 key principles:
 - Identity—Who am I?
 - Existence—Why am I here?
 - Meaning—What is the purpose of life?
 - Destiny—What happens to me when I die?

- And because of this reality, the most important question we need to answer is:
 - Is there a God?
 - Who is God?
 - Which God is the correct God?
 - What does He require of me?

Other Metaphysical Beliefs

- What is the basic composition of the universe?
 - Materialists—everything in the world is material
 - Plato and Aristotle—the world is a combination of matter and form
 - Form is what unifies matter into a single object
 - Soul and body as a special case of form and matter
 - Idealism—the world is mind and matter is illusion
 - Pantheism—the world itself is divine
- Do things change or do they stay the same?
 - Everything remains unchanged
 - Everything is in a constant state of change
 - Only the forms remain unchanged while matter always changes
- Does nature and history work towards a goal (telos) or do they randomly occur without any direction?
 - Everything that takes place has a purpose
 - The only purpose that exists is that which people create for themselves
 - Everything is meaningless
- Do human beings have souls or are we just what our brains tell us to do?
- How does the human mind operate?
- What is the connection between cause and effect?
 - Determinist—every event is caused by another event which creates a never-ending chain—no matter what you do, the future will happen the way that is determined
 - Behaviorist—human beings are nothing more than machines responding to impulse and stimuli—we are what our brain does
 - Libertarian—people act without any other event causing them to do so (free will)

What is a Worldview?

A worldview

- A network of presuppositions, an entire system of assumptions.
- A network of presuppositions *which are not tested by natural science.*
 - Presuppositions can't be counted, weighed, or measured; they are not seen, heard, or felt.
 - They are immaterial beliefs in one's mind
 - Science can only test things that are material

- They are the foundations upon which science stands and sensory experiences are understood.
 - The immaterial beliefs / reason / logic are what science depends upon
- The scientist's foundation is the laboratory where they perform their experiments
- Science itself stands on the foundation of presuppositions in order to analyze the world
 - Example—1953 Francis Crick DNA structure—attributed it to evolution
- A worldview then is a network of *complex web* of *numerous beliefs* organized in a system of truth used to make sense of the world around us
 - The Christian faith is a complex system of beliefs that make up the biblical worldview
- All worldviews have presuppositions that they rely upon
 - Assumptions that the facts are interpreted by
 - Francis Crick assumed DNA evolved
 - Christians assume it was created
 - Presuppositions are personal commitments that are the building blocks of the foundation where a person's worldview rests
 - God exists / God doesn't exist / matter is all that exists / the ideal is all that exists
 - Presuppositions are the starting point by which everything else is interpreted and evaluated
 - Presuppositions hold the authority in a person's thinking
 - They are not negotiable
- A network of presuppositions ... in terms of which *all* experience is related
 - *Every* person has a framework through which he understands the world
 - Nobody is neutral
 - Nobody interprets evidence without presuppositions
 - Nobody simply allows the facts to interpret themselves
 - Because facts cannot do this
 - They must be interpreted
 - They are interpreted through the lens / worldview of the individual
 - Everyone has a way of looking at the world
- The most important question a person can ever ask themselves is:
 - Am I starting with the correct presuppositions when I am making sense of the world around me?

The Presuppositions of the Three Metaphysical Worldviews

- **1—Everything that exists came from nothing**
 - Big bang / evolution = *atheism*
 - Everything came from an impersonal source
 - Everything formed over time by random chance
 - We are nothing more than energy particles
 - Questions to consider:

- How does something come from nothing?
 - How are morals defined, and why do morals even exist?
 - How do we account for unity and diversity?
 - Everything is distinct—but related = how?
- Metanarrative / meaning / purpose / order / personality
- How does a rational universe evolve from an irrational beginning (chaos), by itself, without aid?
- How could any concept of rationality come from an irrational universe?
 - “We take the side of science *in spite of* the patent absurdity of some of its constructs, *in spite of* its failure to fulfill many of its extravagant promises of health and life, *in spite of* the tolerance of the scientific community for unsubstantiated just-so stories, because we have a prior commitment, a commitment to materialism. It is not that the methods and institutions of science somehow compel us to accept a material explanation of the phenomenal world, but, on the contrary, that we are forced by our a priori adherence to material causes to create an apparatus of investigation and a set of concepts that produce material explanations, no matter how counterintuitive, no matter how mystifying to the uninitiated. **Moreover, that materialism is absolute, for we cannot allow a Divine Foot in the door**”
 - Richard Lewontin, “Billions and Billions of Demons,” *The New York Review* (January 9, 1997), 31
- What he is saying here is even if the facts and evidence do not make sense
 - We have to make sure we do not allow the biblical God in the discussion
 - Hence = modern day universities
- Christian presuppositions have been attacked directly and indirectly for centuries
 - David Hume (1711–1776): “Nothing can be more unphilosophical than to be positive or dogmatical on any subject.”
 - William Hazlitt (1778–1830): “The great difficulty in philosophy is to come to every question with a mind fresh and unshackled by former theories.”
 - William H. Seward (1801–1872): “The circumstances of the world are so variable, that an irrevocable purpose or opinion is almost synonymous with a foolish one.”
 - Oliver Wendell Holmes (1841–1935): “To have doubted one’s own first principles is the mark of a civilized man.”
 - Alfred North Whitehead (1861–1947): “In philosophical discussion, the merest hint of dogmatic certainty as to finality of statement is an exhibition of folly.”
 - Bertrand Russell (1872–1970): “In all affairs it’s a healthy thing now and then to hang a question mark on the things you have long taken for granted.”
 - Alan Bloom (1930–1992): “The most important function of the university in an age of reason is to protect reason from itself, by being the model of truly openness.”

- Charles Colson: “Our educational establishment seeks to instill a passion for intellectual curiosity and openness, but allows for the existence of no truth worth pursuing.” While in college, Christians should not be passive sponges merely absorbing the material, but instead be active filters sorting out the issues through a biblical grid.”
- Carl Sagan: *the cosmos is all there is, all there was, and all there ever will be*
 - What do you think he means by this statement?
 - How is he describing reality?
 - What is he saying about the world around us?
- **2—Everything that exists had an impersonal beginning**
 - New Age / Hinduism / Buddhism / Gnosticism / Occult = *Pantheism*
 - Everything came from an impersonal source
 - Everything formed over time by random chance
 - All matter is illusion
 - All that exists is mind (idealism)
 - Everything is a mental context
 - There is no such thing as true objective reality, in the context where we all see the world through our own prism
 - We all think our understanding of a thing is objective
 - There are different ways to look at an object
 - Every experience you have is happening to you and for you
 - Whether you are conscious of it or not is up to you
 - Filters need to be removed— be still
 - The U Inverse
 - Your higher self projecting back to you
 - Your unconscious mind
 - The lens through which you see the world
 - This must be experienced—not taught
 - Your own judgments are based upon your present lens
 - Your consciousness needs to be enlightened to see things more clearly
 - Questions to consider:
 - How do we account for human personality?
 - How do we account for morals and ethics?
 - How do we account for diversity?
 - Metanarrative / meaning / purpose / order
- **3—Everything was created by a personal— infinite—triune God**
 - God created all things
 - Time, space, and matter
 - God sets the rules—He is the source of knowledge—He defines reality
 - We exist because God willed for us to exist

- He did not have to create us, but chose to
- He created us for worship and fellowship
- Personal—
 - We have personality because God has personality
 - Personality cannot come from impersonal material
- Infinite—
 - Everything that exists must have a cause
 - God created time, space, matter, and humanity
 - God does not need a cause because He never came into existence
 - He is infinite and eternal
- Triune God—fellowship
 - The Father, Son, and Holy Spirit have been in constant fellowship for all eternity
 - We communicate and fellowship with one another because we are reflecting the image of the God who created us