



Worldview

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"Explaining spiritual realities with Spirit-taught words."

1 Corinthians 2:13

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W.D. Furioso, Writer ~ Frances Furioso, Editor

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Preface

What is real?

How do I understand reality?

What do I perceive when I look out at the world?

What are the implications of what I perceive?

These are some fundamental questions of human existence. Each of us answer questions like these according to *how we perceive reality*. And that is the essence of the term “**worldview**”. In fact, that is a simple definition of the term “*worldview*” - “*perception of reality*”. The subject of worldview is deep, wide, and high (a bit lofty). This article is intentionally focused on just the essential ingredients of worldview – namely, “**perception**” and “**reality**”.





Perception

Perception is the transmission and interpretation of our experiences of the world around us, through our senses, to our minds. Please bear up with some technical terminology... The process begins with an object in the real world, termed the *distal stimulus* or *distal object*. By means of light, sound or another physical processes, the object stimulates the body's sensory organs. These sensory organs transform the input energy into neural activity—a process called *transduction*. This raw pattern of neural activity is called the *proximal stimulus*. These neural

signals are transmitted to the brain and processed. The resulting mental re-creation of the distal stimulus is the *percept*.¹

For the sake of analysis, we can separate “perception” into two processes: Firstly, *the processing of sensory input* which transforms low-level information to higher-level information. A *sense* is a physiological capacity of organisms that provides data for perception. A *sensory system* is a part of the nervous system responsible for processing sensory information. A sensory system consists of sensory receptors, neural pathways, and parts of the brain involved in sensory perception. Commonly recognized sensory systems are those for vision, hearing, somatic sensation (touch), taste and olfaction (smell). **In short, senses are transducers from the physical world to the realm of the mind.**²

Secondly, there is *the processing connected with a person's previous experience and knowledge*, as well as mechanisms such as attention, which influence one's perceptions and expectations.³ Various forms of sensory stimulation combined with our previous experience and knowledge allow us to create

¹ Goldstein, E. Bruce, “Sensation and Perception” (2009), pp. 5-7.

² Krantz, John, “Experiencing Sensation and Perception”, Chapter 1, “What is Sensation and Perception” (2013), p. 1.6

³ Cf. Bernstein, Douglas A. (5 March 2010). *Essentials of Psychology*. Cengage Learning. pp. 123–124. ISBN 978-0-495-90693-3.

our overall perception. Perception is shaped by learning, memory, expectation, and attention.⁴ It is important to note that **perception is a continuous learning experience.**

What some refer to as a *“Perceptual Set”*, is *a predisposition to perceive things in a certain way based on expectations shaped by previous experience.*⁵ Essentially, one’s **“perceptual set”** is one’s **worldview.**

“Predictive Coding” is a theory of cognition in which the brain is constantly generating and updating a mental model of sensory input. The model is broadcast through the network of sensory processing brain regions. In each region, the model being propagated is compared to the current sensory input, and if they do not match, a *“Prediction Error”* is sent back up the network and the model is revised. Again, **perception is a continuous learning experience.** This is why the more familiar one is with something, the more one perceives, and understands, and appreciates it.

I believe this concept of *perception*, as being a **learning experience**, can be paralleled to that which the apostle Paul referred to as **“the renewing of the mind”**⁶ by the working of the

⁴ Gregory, Richard, “Perception” (1987), pp. 598-601

⁵ Cf. Weiten, Wayne, *“Psychology: Themes and Variations”* (2008), p. 193

⁶ The (Greek) *anakainosis*, Strong’s # 342, “renewing” of the (Greek) *nous*, Strong’s # 3563, “mind”; Cf. Romans 12:2; Ephesians 4:23; Titus 3:5.

Holy Spirit through the scriptures He inspired.⁷ But, to again put it in technical terms ... Through the processes of “predictive coding”, one’s mental models are being continuously generated and updated, thus changing, and renewing one’s “perceptual set” or worldview. And, of course, for the learners of Christ, Paul would endorse that *the input source of our knowledge and experience would be the Holy Spirit and the scriptures He inspired through which we “perceive His glory in the face of Jesus Christ”*.⁸ Thus, our perception of reality would constitute a biblical worldview which would reflect the glory of God.



⁷ 2 Timothy 3:16; 2 Peter 1:20-21; Cf. Psalm 19:7-11; 1 Corinthians 2:13; 1 Thessalonians 2:13

⁸ 2 Corinthians 3:18 and 4:6



Reality

I have defined “worldview” as *a perception of reality*; but here are two more definitions from notable scholars:

- *“A ‘life-system’, rooted in a fundamental principle from which is derived a whole complex of ruling ideas and conceptions about reality.”* _ Abraham Kuyper
- *“A perspective on life, a whole system of thought that answers the questions presented by the reality of existence.”* _ Francis Schaeffer

There are a good number of different presentations of the various worldviews.⁹ The listing, labeling, defining, and

⁹ For a good overview of the concept of “worldview”, I would suggest *“Worldview: Definitions, History, and Importance of a Concept”*, a lecture by Dr. David Naugle, Professor of Philosophy, Dallas Baptist University: https://www3.dbu.edu/naugle/pdf/worldview_DefHistConceptLect.pdf

categorizing of all the various worldviews is an interesting and exhaustive endeavor indeed. I will leave that task for others to work out. Suffice to say here that all worldviews speak in various ways to the basic and ultimate issues of life, existence, and afterlife. And all worldviews hold various perspectives regarding the main branches of philosophy:

- Ontology, the study of Reality
- Epistemology, the study of Knowledge
- Axiology, the study of Value.
- et. al.

and the various disciplines of scholarly study:

- Theology, the study of God
- Ethics, the study of Morality
- Aesthetics, the study of Beauty
- Logic, the study of Thought
- Physical Sciences, the study of the Physical Universe
- Social Sciences, the study of Human Society
- et. al.

For our purpose here, we could classify worldviews into two very broad categories representing two very different views of reality: **“Naturalism”** and **“Supernaturalism”**.

Naturalism, also known as *Physicalism* or *Materialism*, is the view that everything in the universe, including plant, animal, and human life forms, and all their faculties, consists solely of physical matter. Naturalism does not recognize “soul” or “spirit”. The material universe is all that exists.¹⁰ Only that which can be observed with the senses is real, and is to be investigated by, and explained through, the scientific method alone. Some examples of this worldview are: Secular Humanism, Atheism, Agnosticism, Postmodernism. *A salient feature of Naturalism* is that it doesn’t address the idea of a spiritual dimension of reality – either the spiritual dimension doesn’t exist (in its most stringent forms), or if it does exist, it is impossible to be investigated and explained (Agnosticism).

By the term, *Supernaturalism*, I simply mean the general contrasting view that reality does have a spiritual dimension. There are different varieties of *supernaturalism*.

One supernatural view maintains that *only* the spiritual dimension exists – all else is illusion. Two examples of this worldview are Pantheism and Hinduism. And some go on to say that what appears to be many, separate things in nature actually all belong

¹⁰ *Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy*

to one impersonal, grand, spiritual force which alone is reality.¹¹ Examples of this are Taoism, Buddhism, New Age Spirituality, et. al.

Another supernatural view regards material things to be real but sees a spiritual dimension behind the physical dimension in which spirit entities like gods, angels, demons control the activities of all things in nature. Examples of this are Animism, Polytheism, Spiritism, et. al.

A salient feature of the most stringent forms of Supernaturalism is that the divine is not separate from creation. The “divine” is seen as a “spiritual force of nature” (for example, Tao) resident in all of creation, including humanity. And therefore, the “salvation” of humanity is to realize their oneness with the divine – that humanity itself is divine.

And there is a supernatural worldview which recognizes a personal Spirit Being, Almighty God, who has always existed in eternity past – before space and time. As the Creator of all that exists, He is separate and above all that He has created. This is what distinguishes it from the other forms of Supernaturalism. Humanity has been made in His image and likeness. In fact, all of

¹¹ Monism: “All is One. One is All. All is God.”

His creation reflects His attributes. And His “attributes”, which are many, are His glory reflected throughout all of His creation.¹²

This is the One True, Triune God who has chosen to reveal Himself through His creation, through scriptures which He Himself has inspired, and ultimately through His own Incarnation, Jesus Christ. **This a short summary of the worldview of biblical Christianity.** Accordingly, we have **The Creator God** – the Origin and Source of all life – Ultimate Reality. And we also have the **Creation** - comprised of all the material things in nature, including human beings as well as all that human beings *re-create*.

Asah is a Hebrew word which can be translated – *to create*. There is another Hebrew word, *bara*, which technically means *to make something out of nothing*. But *asah*, particularly when used in combination with *bara*, means *to make or form something* – we could understand it to mean *recreate*. In the beginning, in the Garden, God told Humanity to “be fruitful and multiply” (Genesis 1:28). Humanity certainly is engaged in "creative" endeavors, but not necessarily "creating" endeavors in an exact sense of the word. "Creative" can be used as an adverb

¹² While it is beyond the scope of this particular article to discuss the various attributes of God, reading articles on the attributes of God would be highly recommended. Some recommended reading: *The Attributes of God*, Arthur W. Pink (Baker); *Knowing God*, J.I. Packer (IVP); *The Knowledge of the Holy*, A.W. Tozer (Harper & Row)

describing the activity, or an adjective describing the result. But I think it would be universally accepted to say that Humanity is *not creating something from nothing*, but rather, *making or forming something from pre-existing materials*. That is, "recreating". God "creates" – Humanity "recreates".



Static?

The word “static” has both positive and negative connotations: Positive – unchanging, unvarying, constant. Negative – inert, stagnant, inactive. We must ask ourselves:

“Should my worldview be static (in the negative sense)?”

“Shouldn’t my worldview be positively growing and increasing in my perception of reality?”

Our approach should be to always be open to considering additional insight and understanding to that which we already hold – while not necessarily abandoning what we already hold to be true. I believe this bears repeating: **Perception is a continuous learning experience.** I say this because many of us have the tendency of desiring to “arrive” at a “perfected”, in the sense of a “completed”, body of truth which we can continually “fall back on”. And often, unless for whatever reason, we become dissatisfied with our “set of beliefs”, we tend to not be open to or not want to invest time and effort into *further learning experiences* which may be different or appear to be different to what we currently believe. This tendency could be considered somewhat “normal”, in that the meaning of “truth” – at least the biblical meaning - is “faithful”, “unchanging”, “established”,¹³ and therefore, something “you can depend upon”. I personally believe the biblical understanding of truth is accurate – *in a fundamental sense, truth is unchanging.* There is the “Spirit of Truth” (John 16:13), and the scriptures He inspired are the “measure” (canon) of truth. However, that does not mean *our* perception and *our* understanding is “perfect” or even “complete”. In fact, the Holy Spirit, who inspired those very scriptures, has been given to “guide us into all the truth”. (John 16:13) In other words, while they will never contradict the Spirit-

¹³ (Hebrew) *emeth*, Strong’s # H571, faithful, reliable, established. (Greek) *aletheia*, Strong’s # G225, reality, *Vine’s Expository Dictionary of New Testament Words: “the reality lying at the basis of an appearance; the manifested, veritable essence of a matter”* (Cremer)

inspired scriptures, new (to you) insights, or better - *further insights, more complete revelation and understanding* always awaits us. To be clear: This is not “new” in the sense of not already in the scriptures, but “new to us” in *furthering our perception, understanding, and experience of what is already written* – all by the agency of the One who inspired the writing – “the Spirit of Truth”.

Thus, **our worldview** - *our perception of reality* - can be always growing and increasing – *an ongoing learning experience* - **“renewing of the mind”**¹⁴ – with the input source of our knowledge and experience being the Holy Spirit and the scriptures He inspired,¹⁵ through which we *“perceive His glory in the face of Jesus Christ”*¹⁶ – “in whom are all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge”.¹⁷ Thus, **our perception of reality will constitute a biblical worldview reflecting the glory of God.**

¹⁴ The (Greek) *anakainosis*, Strong’s # 342, “renewing” of the (Greek) *nous*, Strong’s # 3563, “mind”; Cf. Romans 12:2; Ephesians 4:23; Titus 3:5.

¹⁵ 2 Timothy 3:16; 2 Peter 1:20-21; Cf. Psalm 19:7-11; 1 Corinthians 2:13; 1 Thessalonians 2:13

¹⁶ 2 Corinthians 3:18 and 4:6

¹⁷ Colossians 2:3; Cf. Ephesians 1:3, 7-14, 3:8-9

Bill & Frances Furioso
~ At Christ's Table ~



Bill Furioso and his wife, Frances, have been married for more than 40 years, and have two children, four grandchildren, and two great-grandchildren.

Bill and Frances served as missionaries in South Africa for thirteen years making disciples, establishing churches, and training church leaders. Over a span of 40 years, they also traveled extensively in an itinerant Bible teaching ministry which took them to hundreds of gatherings on four continents ministering in churches, conferences, spiritual formation seminars, and home gatherings. They have shepherded several churches, discipled many to Christ, and mentored church leaders in the USA and abroad.

Being an avid student by nature, Bill has done both formal and informal study in various fields including Education, Music, Philosophy and Theology. As a writer, he has authored many publications which are distributed worldwide. Because of Bill's disabilities resulting from a spinal cord injury, he can no longer travel, so their ministries of writing, recording, distributing, mentoring, and correspondence are now shared primarily via the Internet... www.AtChristsTable.org

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“Explaining spiritual realities with Spirit-taught words.” 1 Corinthians 2:13

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with a view to

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