Eastern Pantheistic Monism

Search For Answers

November 22, 2015
John Babich, Presenter
The Universe Next Door: A Basic Worldview Catalog (5th Ed.), by James W. Sire
Worldviews Revisited Series

• Introduction to Worldviews (10/25/15)
• Christian Theism, Deism, Islamic Theism (11/01/15)
• Naturalism, Nihilism (11/08/15)
• existentialism (11/15/15)
• Eastern Pantheistic Monism (11/22/15)
• The New Age, Postmodernism (11/29/15)
• How Shall We Then Live? (12/06/15)
What is a Worldview?

“A worldview is a commitment, a fundamental orientation of the heart, that can be expressed as a story or in 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 constitution of reality, and that provides the foundation on which we live and move and have our being.”

Eight Basic Questions

1. What is the prime reality – the really real?
2. What is the nature of external reality, that is, the world around us?
3. What is a human being?
4. What happens to a person after 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 core commitments are consistent with this worldview?

Basic Eastern Pantheistic Monism

*Journey to the East*
The Lure of the East

“And all the voices, all the goals, all the yearnings, all the sorrows, all the pleasures, all the good and evil, all of them together was the world. . . . The great song with thousand voices consisted of one word: OM—perfection.”

- Herman Hesse, *Siddhartha*

Pantheistic Monism

“The following description is limited to the Eastern worldview most popular in the West: pantheistic monism. This is the root worldview that underlies the Hindu Advaita Vedanta system of Shankara, the Transcendental Meditation of Maharishi Mahesh Yogi, and much of the Upanishads.

Source: James Sire, p. 147, The Universe Next Door, 5th Ed. (2009)
Pantheistic Monism

There are especially the views so beautifully captured by the German writer Hermann Hesse in his *Siddhartha*, a novel that became popular with college students in the 1970s and thus served as a transmitter of a generic pantheistic monism. Buddhism, which developed from Hinduism, shares many of its features but differs with it at a key point: the nature of ultimate reality.”

*Source: James Sire, p. 147, The Universe Next Door, 5th Ed. (2009)*
Herman Hesse (1877-1962)
Two Considerations - #1

“The eight worldview questions imply a set of categories that do not neatly fit the categories (or lack of them) that characterize Eastern thought. The East does not readily accept the distinctions we so readily assume between God and the cosmos (his creation); human beings and the rest of the cosmos; good and evil and illusion and reality.”

Two Considerations - #2

“We must be aware of the vast differences among religious and cultural embodiments of Eastern pantheism. Worldview analysis is neither a description nor analysis of religions...When we try to grasp the worldview of any given writer or individual person, we need to pay careful attention to his or her understanding of their basic intellectual commitments.”

Questions #1-3

1. What is the prime reality – the really real?
2. What is the nature of external reality, that is, the world around us?
3. What is a human being?

Answer to Questions #1-3

• Atman is Braham; that is, the soul of each and every human being is the Soul of the cosmos (ultimate reality).
• Some things are more one than others.
• Many (if not all) roads lead to the One.
• The cosmos is perfect at every moment.
• To realize one’s oneness with the cosmos is to pass beyond personality.

Source: James Sire, Chapter 7, The Universe Next Door, 5th Ed. (2009)
Atman is Braham

“The soul of each and every human being is the Soul of the cosmos. Atman (the essence, the soul, of any person) is Brahman (the essence, the Soul of the whole cosmos). What is a human being? That is, what is at the very core of each of us? Each person is the whole shooting match. Each person is (to put it boldly but accurately in Eastern terms) God.”

Atman is Braham

“That is, God is the cosmos. God is all that exists; nothing exists that is not God. If anything that is not God appears to exist, it is *maya*, illusion, and does not truly exist. In other words, any thing that exists as a separate and distinct object - this chair, not that one; this rock, not that tree; me, not you - is an illusion. It is not our separateness that gives us reality, it is our oneness, the fact that we are Brahman and Brahman is One. Yes, Brahman is the One.”

*Source: James Sire, p. 149, The Universe Next Door, 5th Ed. (2009)*
Some things are more one than others

“Reality is a hierarchy of appearances. Some “things,” some appearances or illusions, are closer than others to being at one with the One. Matter pure and simple (that is, mineral) is the least real; then vegetable life, then animal and finally humanity. But humanity too is hierarchical; some people are closer to unity than others. The Perfect Master, the Enlightened One, the guru are the human beings nearest to pure being.”

What is a Person?

CHRISTIAN VIEW

Image of God
Humans
Plants
Animals
Machine

EASTERN VIEW

BRAHMAN

Humans
Animals
Plants
Mineral
Ascended Humans

Source: Left side adapted from p.29, Francis Schaeffer, Complete Works (Vol. 5) (1982)
Many (if not all) roads lead to the One

“Getting to oneness with the One is not a matter of finding the one true path. There are many paths from maya to reality. I may take one, you another, a friend a third, ad infinitum. The goal is not to be with one another on the same path but to be headed in the right direction on our own path. That is, we must be oriented correctly.”

Many (if not all) roads lead to the One

‘Orientation is not so much a matter of doctrine as of technique. On this the East is adamant. Ideas are not finally important. As Sri Ramakrishna said, “Do not argue about doctrines and religions. There is only one. All rivers flow to the Ocean. Flow and let others flow too!”’

The cosmos is perfect at every moment

“The world...is not imperfect or slowly evolving along a long path to perfection. No, it is perfect at every moment; every sin already carries grace within it, all small children are potential old men, all sucklings have death within them, all dying people- eternal life, ...Therefore, it seems to me that everything that exists is good - death as well as life, sin as well as holiness, wisdom as well as folly.”

- Siddhartha in Herman Hesse, *Siddhartha*

*Source: James Sire, p. 157, The Universe Next Door, 5th Ed. (2009)*
Beyond Personality

“In pantheism the chief thing about God is Oneness, a sheer abstract, undifferentiated, nondual unity. This puts God beyond personality. And since Atman is Brahman, human beings are beyond personality too. For any of us to “realize” our being is for us to abandon our complex personhood and enter the undifferentiated One.”

Question #4

What happens to a person after death?

*(EPM)* Death is the end of individual, personal existence, but it changes nothing essential in an individual's nature.

Question #5

Why is it possible to know anything at all?

(EPM) To realize one's oneness with the cosmos is to pass beyond knowledge. The principle of non-contradiction does not apply where ultimate reality is concerned.

Question #6

How do we know what is right and wrong?

(EPM) To realize one's oneness with the cosmos is to pass beyond good and evil; the cosmos is perfect at every moment.

What is the meaning of human history?

*(EPM)* To realize one's oneness with the One is to pass beyond time. Time is unreal. History is cyclical.

*Source: James Sire, p. 158, The Universe Next Door, 5th Ed. (2009)*
Question #8

What personal, life-orienting core commitments are consistent with this worldview?

*(Hinduism)* One consistent commitment is, by the elimination of desire, to achieve salvation, that is, to realize one's union with the One.

Question #8

What personal, life-orienting core commitments are consistent with this worldview?

(Buddhism) One consistent commitment is, by the elimination of desire, to achieve salvation, that is, to realize one's union with the Void, pure consciousness.

Appendix
Two-Story Dichotomy

FAITH (NONREASON—OPTIMISM)

THE RATIONAL (PESSIMISM)

## The New Super-spirituality

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>THE NONRATIONAL AND NONLOGICAL</th>
<th>Existential experience; the final experience; the first-order experience.</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>THE RATIONAL AND LOGICAL</td>
<td>Only particulars, no purpose; no meaning. Man is a machine.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Soli Deo Gloria

http://searchforanswers.org