Theism and Deism

Search For Answers

November 1, 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, Eastern Pantheistic Monism (11/15/15)
• The New Age, Postmodernism (11/22/15)
• How Shall We Then Live? (11/29/15)
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.”

Seven Basic Questions

“If a worldview can be expressed by propositions, what might they be? Essentially, they are our basic, rock-bottom answers to the following seven questions:”

Eight Seven 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?

Christian Theism

A Universe Charged with the Grandeur of God
What is the prime reality – the really real?

(CT) Prime reality is the infinite, personal God revealed in the Holy Scriptures. This God is triune, transcendent and immanent, omniscient, sovereign, and good.

Question #2

What is the nature of external reality, that is, the world around us?

(CT) External reality is the cosmos God created ex nihilo to operate with a uniformity of cause and effect in an open system.

What is a human being?

(CT) Human beings are created in the image of God and thus possess personality, self-transcendence, intelligence, morality, gregariousness and creativity.

Question #3

What is a human being?

*(CT)* Human beings were created good, but through the Fall the image of God became defaced, though not so ruined as not to be capable of restoration; through the work of Christ, God redeemed humanity and began the process of restoring people to goodness, though any given person may choose to reject that redemption.

What happens to a person after death?

(CT) For each person death is either the gate to life with God and his people or the gate to eternal separation from the only thing that will ultimately fulfill human aspirations.

Question #5

Why is it possible to know anything at all?

(CT) Human beings can know both the world around them and God himself because God has built into them the capacity to do so and because he takes an active role in communicating with them.

Question #6

How do we know what is right and wrong?

(CT) Ethics is transcendent and is based on the character of God as good (holy and loving).

Question #7

What is the meaning of human history?

(CT) History is linear, a meaningful sequence of events leading to the fulfillment of God's purposes for humanity.

Question #8

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

*(CT)* Christian theists live to seek first the kingdom of God, that is, to glorify God and enjoy him forever.

*Source: James Sire, p. 23, The Universe Next Door, 5th Ed. (2009)*
Deism

The Clockwork Universe
Question #1

What is the prime reality – the really real?

(D) A transcendent God, as a First Cause, created the universe but then left it to run on its own. God is thus not immanent, not triune, not fully personal, not sovereign over human affairs, not providential.

Question #2

What is the nature of external reality, that is, the world around us?

(D) The cosmos God created is determined, because it is created as a uniformity of cause and effect in a closed system; no miracle is possible.

Question #3

What is a human being?

(D) Human beings, though personal, are a part of the clockwork of the universe.

Question #4

What happens to a person after death?

(D) Human beings may or may not have a life beyond their physical existence.

Question #5

Why is it possible to know anything at all?

(D) Through our innate and autonomous human reason and the methods of science, we can not only know the universe but we can infer at least something of what God is like. The cosmos, this world, is understood to be in its normal state; it is not fallen or abnormal.

Question #6

How do we know what is right and wrong?

(D) Ethics is intuitive or limited to general revelation; because the universe is normal, it reveals what is right.

Question #7

What is the meaning of human history?

(D) History is linear, for the course of the cosmos was determined at creation. Still the meaning of the events of history remains to be understood by the application of human reason to the data unearthed and made available to historians.

Question #8

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

(D) Cold deists [those who don’t believe in an afterlife] use their own autonomous reason to determine their goal in life;

Question #8

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

(D) warm deists [who do believe in an afterlife] may reflect on their commitment to a somewhat personal God and determine their goal in accordance with what they believe their God would be pleased with.

Islamic Theism

*There is no God but Allah
and Muhammad is his Prophet*

- *The Shahada (Muslim declaration of faith)*
What is the prime reality – the really real?

(FT) The fundamental reality of Islam is God (Allah), described as monotheistic, infinite, personal, transcendent, immanent, omniscient, sovereign and good. Of these attributes Islam emphasizes his oneness, transcendence and sovereignty. There has been debate as to what extent the Qur'an should be included in the category of fundamental reality.

Question #2

What is the nature of external reality, that is, the world around us?

(IT) God (Allah) created the universe ex nihilo, and all creatures are responsible to him. However, the world is a closed system insofar as nothing happens in the world outside of his divine decrees.

Question #3

What is a human being?

(IT) Human beings are the pinnacle of God's creation. They have been given abilities of which other creatures, such as angels and jinn, are not capable. However, their high standing also brings with it the responsibility to live up to God's standards.

Question #4

What happens to a person after death?

(IT) Death is a time of transition between this life and our eternal state, which will consist of either paradise or hell.

Why is it possible to know anything at all?

(IT) Allah has endowed human beings with the capability of knowledge by means of reason and the senses. Thereby, they can also know God's revelation. However, God's sovereign decrees limit human knowledge.

How do we know what is right and wrong? 

(IT) Right and wrong are based on the teachings of the Qur'an, as amplified by the Hadith and interpreted by the schools of law, the shari'a.

What is the meaning of human history?

(IT) Human history has significance in demonstrating the absolute sovereignty of God but, even more so, as the opportunity for people to demonstrate their submission to him.

Question #8

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

(IT) A devout Muslim is grateful to Allah for providing the opportunity to serve him and will strive to follow the divine instructions in even the smallest part of life.

“The Slide”

Judaic Theism

Islamic Theism

Christian Theism

Deism

Naturalism

Nihilism
God – Humanity – Universe

TRANSCENDENCE

God
Creator

Creation
The Universe
Humans

IMMANENCE

God

The Universe
Humans
Human Exceptionalism

Source: Adapted from p.29, Francis Schaeffer, Complete Works (Vol. 5) (1982)
Shahada
Declaration of faith

Salat
Obligatory prayer

Zagat
Compulsory giving

Sawm
Fasting in the month of Ramadan

Hajj
Pilgrimage to Mecca

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<tr>
<th>#</th>
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- Human beings were created good, but through the Fall the image of God became defaced, though not so ruined as not to be capable of restoration; through the work of Christ, God redeemed humanity and began the process of restoring people to goodness, though any given person may choose to reject that redemption. | Human beings, though personal, are a part of the clockwork of the universe. | Human beings are the pinnacle of God’s creation. They have been given abilities of which other creatures, such as angels and jinn, are not capable. However, their high standing also brings with it the responsibility to live up to God’s standards. |
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| 5  | Why is it possible to know anything at all?        | Human beings can know both the world around them and God himself because God has built into them the capacity to do so and because he takes an active role in communicating with them. | Through our innate and autonomous human reason and the methods of science, we can not only know the universe but we can infer at least something of what God is like. The cosmos, this world, is understood to be in its normal state; it is not fallen or abnormal. | Allah has endowed human beings with the capability of knowledge by means of reason and the senses. Thereby, they can also know God’s revelation. However, God’s sovereign decrees limit human knowledge. |
| 6  | How do we know what is right and wrong?            | Ethics is transcendent and is based on the character of God as good (holy and loving). | Ethics is intuitive or limited to general revelation; because the universe is normal, it reveals what is right. | Right and wrong are based on the teachings of the Qur’an, as amplified by the Hadith and interpreted by the schools of law, the shari’a. |
| 7  | What is the meaning of human history?              | History is linear, a meaningful sequence of events leading to the fulfillment of God’s purposes for humanity. | History is linear, for the course of the cosmos was determined at creation. Still the meaning of the events of history remains to be understood by the application of human reason to the data unearthed and made available to historians. | Human history has significance in demonstrating the absolute sovereignty of God but, even more so, as the opportunity for people to demonstrate their submission to him. |
| 8  | What personal, life-orienting core commitments are consistent with this worldview? | Christian theists live to seek first the kingdom of God, that is, to glorify God and enjoy him forever. | Cold deists [those who don’t believe in an afterlife] use their own autonomous reason to determine their goal in life; warm deists [who do believe in an afterlife] may reflect on their commitment to a somewhat personal God and determine their goal in accordance with what they believe their God would be pleased with. | A devout Muslim is grateful to Allah for providing the opportunity to serve him and will strive to follow the divine instructions in even the smallest part of life. |
“Nothing-buttery”

“Nothing-buttery is characterized by the notion that by reducing any phenomenon to its components you not only explain it, but you explain it away.”

Soli Deo Gloria

http://searchforanswers.org