

## Meaning, Classification, Epistemological Foundation and Significance of Worldview

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**Abstract:** The central focus of this work is on the importance of worldview, that is, why a worldview is needed and why it is important to be understood. There are several reasons why a person should understand worldview. The main argument in this paper is that, to explain people's knowledge, deeds, perceptions and beliefs about the existence and nature of God (theology), the ultimate nature of reality (metaphysics), the origins and nature of the universe, life, and especially Man (cosmology), the meaning and purpose of the universe, its inanimate elements, and its inhabitants (teleology), the nature and purpose of Man in general and, oneself in particular (anthropology), and the nature of value, what is good and bad, what is right and wrong (axiology), one must get to the root cause, which is the worldview. That is, the framework from which one sees and interprets reality.

**Keywords:** worldview, reality, epistemology, *tawhid*, secularism.

### INTRODUCTION

To have a solid grasp of the concept of "worldview" or "world view", one has to explore the following questions: How is worldview defined and how is it formed? How many worldviews are there? Why do we need a worldview? What are the forms of knowledge on which worldview is built? This work aims to describe answers to these questions and explore these four themes. It proceeds in three parts.

The first part describes the different perspectives of reality. The second part enunciates the meaning, classification and epistemological foundation of worldview. The third part describes the significance of worldview and its role in human life.

### Understanding the different perspectives of reality

Reality is defined as that which is known or believed to exist whether physical (observable and comprehensible) or immaterial (non-physical) while worldview is the glass or lens through which individuals or groups (communities) see and interpret the nature of reality, that is (1) the nature of God and His relation to the world (2) the origin, purpose and development of the universe (3) the nature and purpose of man, and (4) the meaning and nature of life (5) the nature of value (rightness or wrongness of an action).

To adequately grasp and truly understand a worldview one should, therefore, first gain knowledge of the different perspectives of reality. This is because individuals' and group's perspectives of reality determine their perspectives of God, universe, themselves and the nature of value (good and bad).

What is real? How much can be known of reality? Is there anything other than physical reality?

What is ultimate reality? What is ultimate reality composed of? Is reality subjective or objective? These are profound questions in philosophy, science and religion. Our purpose here is not to elaborate the concept of reality but rather to adumbrate the perspectives on the nature and definition of this fundamental concept.

First and foremost, it is worth noting that reality encapsulates everything that exists, whether or not it is visible (physical/material) or invisible (spiritual/immaterial), within or beyond the reach of reason – mind or intellect, objective or subjective. Physical reality is what is perceived by one or more of the five physical senses, namely sight, hearing, taste, smell and touch, whereas immaterial reality is what lies beyond the reach of reason, the senses and experience. Objective reality is what is common to all of us or "what is independent of mind" [1] while subjective reality is what is unique to each of us or "what is determined by the mind" [1].

Second, every person and community have a worldview of reality shaped by his/her experiences or based on (1) assumptions that may be true, partially true or entirely false (2) empirical/scientific evidence and or (3) revelation. The worldview of a person or community

determines and describes their character or the state of their minds. It also describes the world in which they live. Buddha is quoted to have said: "We are what we think. All that we are arises with our thoughts. With our thoughts we make the world" [2].<sup>1</sup>

Third, there are many worldviews of reality, some worldviews change over years while some remain unchanged. Nevertheless, reality, whether physical or metaphysical, is one and unchanging because of time and place.

*"While it's true anything (e.g. a mountain or elephant) can look different from various perspectives, it is not true that the various perspectives change an elephant from being an elephant or change a mountain from being a mountain" [3].*

*"How is it that people who live in the same neighborhood, with very similar experiences of the world around them, can come to such radically different conclusions about the world and how we should live in it? The primary reason is that those people have different worldviews" [4].*

Because reality is unchanging it is described as "a fixed factor in the equation of life" and the different perceptions of it as "variables" [5]. Here it should be noted that one of the causes of differing perceptions of reality is the refusal to accept reality as absolutely independent of human mind which is also the refusal to accept that objective reality requires God/god.

Fourth, there are different perspectives of reality, namely (1) the perspective that true reality is restricted to physical existence and hence, it is the only thing worth knowing. This perspective is called realism and it is traced back to Aristotle. He argued that the physical world is the ultimate reality; that reality is a creation of the senses; meaning, no reality exists independently of the senses (2) the perspective that the physical reality is imaginary. This view is called idealism and it goes back to Plato (428 – 347 B.C.). He divided the world into two, the physical or sensory world and the spiritual or mental world. The former is experienced through senses whereas the latter is experienced through the mind. Plato argued that the physical is imperfect, disorderly and transient in contrast to the latter which is perfect/ideal, orderly and eternal. One can infer that the mental world is, according to Plato, the ultimate reality. He believed that

<sup>1</sup> T. Byrom (trans.), *Dhammapada*, Boston: *Shambhala*, 1993, p.1. Original work was published 1976. For this reference I am indebted to Mark E. Koltko-Rivera, "The Psychology of Worldviews", *Review of General Psychology*, the Educational Publishing Foundation, 2004, Vol. 8, No. 1, 3–58.

reality is a creation of the mind which also means, it does not exist independently of the mind. The postmodern worldview is that the world is an illusion (3) the perspective that beyond the physical/corporeal reality is another form of reality that is neither a creation of the mind (man's thoughts, beliefs and feelings) nor of the senses. This is the view of most religions. They believe in the existence of a supreme being (God/god) and reject the argument that knowledge is created by man through his senses and/or mind. Or to put it more simply and broadly, that man is the creator of reality.

### **Understanding the meaning, classification and epistemological foundation of worldview**

I devoted my attention in the previous section to understanding the perspectives on the nature and definition of reality. I defined worldview as the glass or less through which individuals or groups see and interpret the nature of reality. I described reality as comprising the nature of God and His relation to the world, the origin, purpose and development of the universe, the nature and purpose of man, the meaning and nature of life, and the nature of value (rightness or wrongness of an action). I argued that everyone has a worldview of reality. Some worldview change while others remain unchangeable. Some worldviews are true while others are false. A worldview changes when a person or group come into contact with new ideas and other groups or when there is a change in the meaning system on which they were constructed. Some worldviews are communal while others are individual. Communal worldview is "the framework through which a group of people identify themselves and view the world or others with whom they interact" [6].<sup>2</sup> It is described as 'shared consensus or 'commonsense' [7]. The latter is the framework through which an individual identifies him/herself and views the world or others with whom he/she interacts. Individual worldview is influenced by several factors including religion, culture and the thoughts of people one reads or associates with. Some are in harmony while others are in conflict with each other. This means, each person or community puts on a different pair of invisible coloured eyeglasses for a clear vision of reality. My present purpose is to describe other meanings of worldview, its classification and epistemological foundation.

### **Meaning of Worldview**

The concept "worldview" is used widely in philosophy, theology, science, social science and anthropology [8]. It is noteworthy that, this concept is also termed as "philosophy of life", "world outlook", "world hypotheses", "visions of reality" and "self-and-world construct system", among others [9]. The second

<sup>2</sup> For this description I am indebted to, El-Sayed el-Aswad, *Muslim Worldviews and Everyday Lives*, Plymouth, UK: AltaMira Press, 2012, p.22.

task of this work is to get clear about what worldview is.

Literally, worldview (also world-view and world view) is translated from the German word *Weltanschauung* as “a perception of the world” [10].<sup>3</sup> Technically, it is, in addition to the meaning described in the foregoing, “a framework of ideas & attitudes about the world, ourselves, and life, a comprehensive system of beliefs — with answers for a wide range of questions” [11] about the ultimate nature of Reality, the existence and nature of God/god, the origin, meaning and purpose of the universe, its inanimate elements and its inhabitants, the nature and purpose of humanity in general and oneself in particular, the nature of value, what is good and bad, right and wrong, and the nature and sources of knowledge. Here we can assert that one’s worldview is one’s epistemology, metaphysics, cosmology, teleology, theology, anthropology and axiology; “the sum of all of a person’s insights” [12] on reality (God or no-God, humans, life, value and the world); the “fundamental for how one lives and knows life and for how one acts” [12]; “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 make-up of our world” [7 & 13]; “a set of beliefs that underlie and shape all human thought and action” [7]; “an intellectual construction which gives a unified solution of all the problems of our existence in virtue of a comprehensive hypothesis, a construction, therefore, in which no question is left open and in which everything in which we are interested finds a place” [14].

### Classification of Worldview

Having discussed the meaning of worldview, it is fair to describe its classification. Worldviews are classified differently by different scholars. Here we would like to classify them according to the following scheme:

- Worldviews with religious basis
- Worldviews without religious basis

Worldviews with religious basis share common features or ‘resemblances’; they deal with “untestable matters”; they have rituals or “actions that are repetitive, prescribed, and ceremonial”; they classify things as either sacred or profane revering the former above the latter; they are stable and comprehensive, and; they are based on sacred stories to explain who we are, where we come from, where we are going, what we believe and how we act [15]. Examples of religious

worldviews are Buddhist, Christian, Hindu, Jewish, Islamic, Sikh, Tao, etc.

Judeo-Christian Worldview is a comprehensive perception of the world from Judeo-Christian stand point. It is grounded in the Biblical teachings. Islamic worldview, by contrast, is a comprehensive perception of the world from an Islamic stand point. It is grounded in the Qur’an, the final revelation to mankind, and hadith or the teachings or sayings of the Prophet Muhammad (peace be upon him).

As expounded by al-Attas, the Islamic worldview is “the Islamic vision of reality and truth, which is a metaphysical survey of the visible as well as the invisible worlds including, the perspective of life as a whole”; or “the vision of the totality of being and existence projected by Islam” [16]. It encompasses both *al-Dunya* (the physical world) and *al-Akhirah* (the metaphysical world) [16]. It is a *tawhidic* (monotheistic) worldview.

*Al-Tawhid*, the core feature and the cornerstone of Islamic faith, is the belief that Allah is the creator, manager and governor of the entire universe (*al-Rabb*), that attainment of His pleasure is the ultimate aim of all the endeavours of a human being and that submission to Him is the ultimate purpose of the creation of the universe and all that it contains. He is one and the one worthy of worship without partners or equals (*al-Ilah*) (See Qur’an, 112: 1-4; 59: 22-24 and 2: 255).

To say that the Islamic worldview is *tawhidic* means it is God-centered; it sees all reality as interconnected, i.e. as God’s creation, and this makes it a comprehensive worldview: “Once man places himself on the path of Monotheism, he acquires a comprehensive worldview within the framework of which he finds answers to his probing fundamental question” [17].

*Tawhid* is the fundamental pivot and mother root of all man’s activities [18]. Whatever activity man performs will perish except those that are done in the name of Allah or towards Allah: “And call not, besides Allah, on another god. There is no god but He. Everything (that exists) will perish except His own Face. To Him belongs the Command, and to Him will ye (all) be brought back” (Qur’an, 28:88).

The Islamic worldview encloses within it: (1) belief in Allah (2) belief in the angels (3) belief in the revealed books (4) belief in the Messengers (peace be upon them) (5) belief in the resurrection and the events of *Qiyamah* or the Day of Judgement (6) belief in *al-Qada’ wa al-Qadar khairihi wa sharrihi* or the predestination by Allah of all things, both the good and the bad.

<sup>3</sup> *Weltanschauung* is composed of two words, *Welt*, which means “world” and *Anshchauung*, meaning “perception.” [Bruce Moore (ed.), *The Australian Concise Oxford Dictionary*, 4<sup>th</sup> edition, Melbourne: Oxford University Press, 2004, p. 1629].

There are many things Islam shares with Judaism and Christianity in the perception and understanding of God, Man, life, world/universe and value. They affirm the existence of one God, stress moral responsibility and accountability, believe in the Judgment Day, and eternal reward and punishment.

Worldviews without religious basis are known as God-less, materialist or atheistic worldviews. They are humanly constructed responses to the fundamental questions about God/gods, Man, life, world and value, whose ultimate standard is materialism or physicalism, empiricism, humanism, naturalism, atheism and secularism.

Materialism is the belief that matter or what is physical is the essence of reality [19]; that nothing including immaterial entities such as the mind, souls and spirits can exist independently of matter; empiricism is the belief that observation is the source of all knowledge; humanism is the belief that Man is the measure of all things; relativism is the belief that truth varies from person to person.

Naturalism is a view or belief that there is no God/god, and, consequently, the world/universe and whatever is contained in it are operated by natural laws or forces instead of God/gods or spiritual forces. Naturalism is also known as materialism and atheism. It limits reality to physical natural order or observable facts. It denies metaphysical reality and supernatural entities except that which belongs to the natural world.

Opposed to naturalism and materialism is idealism, i.e. the belief that everything comes from mind or spirit and depends upon its operations [19]. In other words, "mind or spirit exists prior to, and independent of matter [19]. From mind comes ideas. Hence, idealists teach that fundamental reality is made up of ideas rather than material objects; that pursuance of one's high ideals is the goal of life and that there is no reality beyond one's perception (mental impressions or phenomena).

Etymologically, the term atheism is derived from the Greek word 'atheos' meaning "without god". Life without God and man as the measure of all things is the objective of atheism. As a worldview, atheism is an outlook or belief that nature or matter is "all that there is or ever was or ever will be." In other words, it is a description of reality, i.e. man, life, world and value without reference to God/god or deity, supernatural laws or causes.

By limiting reality to physical natural order or observable facts, atheism as an epistemology, reduces knowledge to sense perception [20]. It explains everything that exists by reference to natural causes or natural events alone and every natural event as a product of other natural events [21]; that is, without

reference to God/gods, spirits or magic. Additionally, naturalism holds that regularity in nature is an implication of objective laws.

By rejecting God and supernatural entities, atheism promotes moral relativity and secular humanism. It confines man to the physical universe or the natural world which means that man is a physical creature without spiritual existence after death. Naturalism is traced back to pre-Socratic philosophers, such as Thales, Anaxagoras and especially Democritus [22], if not earlier. Opposed to atheism is theism which is the belief that reality transcends nature and that man is both physical and spiritual being. He has a physical and spiritual existence.

Secularism is a form of free-thought introduced by the British writer George Jacob Holyoake (1817 – 1906) to describe a social order independent of religion (Christianity) and not an argument against religion. In the third edition of his *Principles of Secularism* (1871) and *The Origin and Nature of Secularism* (1896), Holyoake wrote respectively, secularism is,

*"the study of promoting human welfare by material means; measuring human welfare by the utilitarian rule, and making the service of others a duty of life" [23].*

*"a code of duty pertaining to this life, founded on considerations purely human, and intended mainly for those who find theology indefinite or inadequate, unreliable or unbelievable. Its essential principles are three: (1) the improvement of this life by material means. (2) That science is the available Providence of man. (3) That it is good to do good. Whether there be other good or not, the good of the present life is good, and it is good to seek that good" [23].*

Here it is evident that secularism is a worldly approach to life; it is concerned solely with this present physical world and recognize no other. Something is 'secular' when it is "worldly" or "temporal"; not "spiritual" "religious" or "holy"; when it relates to "the worldly affairs" instead of the "religious affairs" or the "eternal or spiritual world" [23]. The following terms are related to "secularism": "unorthodoxy, blasphemy, apostasy, irreligion, religious criticism, agnosticism, atheism, naturalism, earth-centered-isms, humanism (and trans-and posthumanisms), rationalism, skepticism, scientism, modernism, human rights causes, and separations of church and state the world over" [23]. To secularize is to "make something secular." For example, secular person, secular society, secular state, secular culture, secular living, secular music and secular character. Secularization is the effort to implement the programs of secularism. It is "a process that continuously undervalues the significance of the

Church, religious practices and the importance of religious institutions” [24].

In his book *How to be Secular: A Call to Arms for Religious Freedom* (2012: xvi), Jacques Berlinerblau defines secularism as “a political philosophy, which, at its core, is preoccupied with, and often deeply suspicious of, any and all relations between government and religion” [23]. Inferred from this is that the main tenet of secularism is separation of religion and state. This entails separation of religion and public education, law, the ethical principles guiding society and political and social institutions. Separation of state and religion simply means, neither should religious leaders, groups or institutions interfere in affairs of state, nor the state should interfere in religious affairs.

Although the term “secularism” was first used in the nineteenth century, the general notions on which it is existed throughout history. Etymologically, secularism is derived from the Latin word *saeculum* which means ‘world,’ [25] denoting the material world, ‘time,’ [26] denoting “a fixed period of time, roughly one hundred years or so,” [23] and ‘age’ which denotes “this temporal age of the world” [23]. The expression *in hoc saeculo* denotes ‘in this age’, *saeculum futurum* refers to ‘the future age’ or ‘the world to come’; “it begins with the end of *hoc saeculum* and never ends, stretching *in aeternum*, into eternity,” [26] and *saeculum saeculorum* which literally means ‘ages of ages’ or ‘all ages’ applies to ‘both this age and the future one’, meaning “forever” [26]. The term *saecularis* refers to ‘all learning about matters belonging to this age’ [26]. The term is also applied to “events of this age” [26]. From *saeculum* the adjective *saeculare* which means “terrestrial city” or the “Earthy City” is derived [27]. That is, the society of the “irreligious” people; where “self-love” is given first place to the “love of God” and peace is attained by satisfying the flesh. It is distinct from the “*City of God*” or the “Heavenly City”; that is, a society of “devout men”. They love God” at the expense of themselves and attain peace by staying faithful to God. These terms were developed by Saint Augustine of Hippo (354–430 A.D.) in his *The City of God* (426 A.D.) to describe the two ways of life: the secular way and the faithful way.

The objectives of secularism are: first, individual’s need for freedom of, or freedom from religion. Secularism calls for freedom of belief or freedom not to believe. It is not an argument against religion. It, however, teaches that “religion is a private matter and that it should have no role to play in public life” [25&27] or should have very limited role in public life. To say that religion is a private matter also means that it has to be kept to oneself and should not be imposed on others. Furthermore, that it should not influence the decisions of the government or public

policy. More so, that it should not be the basis for judging a person.

*“Being derived from principles of freedom and human rights, secularism does not entail restrictions on freedom of speech beyond those envisaged in the treaties nor does it require bans on religious clothing unless for good reason, related, for example, to safety or efficiency, to a reasonable requirement for a uniform, or where there is a risk of a role (especially an authority role as a public official or a representative of an employer) being appropriated to make a private statement, which might be about religion or belief or perhaps about politics” [28].*

Second, equality of people before the law. In a secular state no one is disadvantaged because of their religious beliefs or non-beliefs and practices, thought and conscience.<sup>4</sup> It follows that there are no religious privileges in a secular state; third, material progress or the welfare of human beings by material means. Secularism advocates a worldly rather than an otherworldly approach to life. Something is secular if it is worldly and unspiritual; and fourth, protection of individuals’ rights from religious discrimination; fifth, promotion of naturalistic and secular based ethical systems. These objectives are achieved through separation of church and state. That is, by keeping the church out of the affairs of the state.

The emergence of secularism changed the intimate relationship between religion and state, priest and official [27]. It excluded or at least reduced the role of religion in public life, in politics, in education, and in all branches of learning” [27].

In secularism man is the measure of all things; he is the ultimate source of reality. The statement “man is the measure of all things” is traced back to the Greek philosopher Protagoras of Abdera (c. 490 - c.420 BCE). He wrote, “Of all things the measure is Man, of the things that are, that they are, and of the things that are not, that they are not” [29].

#### **Epistemological Foundation of Worldview**

There are many questions that human beings have wondered about at different stages of their lives. Such questions can be categorized as: theological questions, metaphysical questions, epistemological questions, cosmological questions, anthropological

<sup>4</sup> It is worth pointing out that a secular state is the one that is neutral on the matters of religion (beliefs and practices). It is not synonymous with a secular society, i.e. a society that distances itself from religion. A secular state grants people freedom of religion or belief, or unbelief. By contrast, a secular society denies that freedom.

questions and ethical questions. They are regarding: (1) the nature of God and His relation to the world; (2) the origin, purpose and development of the universe; (3) the ultimate nature of reality; (4) the nature and purpose of man; and (5) the nature of value.

Answers to the above questions have mainly come from sages, prophets, philosophers and scientists. Therefore, one may classify the knowledge on which worldview is built into four: religious knowledge, scientific or empirical knowledge and philosophical or rational knowledge. Each of these forms of knowledge are important for those who uphold it whether or not it is objectively true. Without knowledge it is impossible for people to explain a practice, belief, or natural phenomenon: "worldviews" writes Jones, "are built on and maintained by meaning systems, that is, forms of knowledge by which 'reality' is established" [30]. There are three views regarding the foundation of reality/truth: (1) the view that the basis of reality/truth is religious or non-religious beliefs; (2) the view that senses/experience are the basis of reality. This view was first advocated by empiricists John Locke, George Berkeley and David Hume. Berkeley argued that: "Being is nothing more than being perceived"; (3) the view that pure reason and not religious beliefs or senses is the basis of reality/truth. The task assumed by this section is to enunciate these forms of reality/truth/worldview/knowledge.

### Religious Beliefs/Knowledge

Judaism, Christianity, Islam, Buddhism and Hinduism are the major world religions. Religious knowledge refers to fundamental set of beliefs and practices revealed or unrevealed. This type of knowledge is comprehensive and all-embracing. It deals with the nature of God/god or the supernatural being, the nature of man, the relation of God/god or supernatural being(s) to man and the world, the relation of man to God/god or supernatural being(s), the relation between groups or between individuals of different groups, meaning and purpose of life and the way to eternal salvation. It determines what is right from wrong and provides people with knowledge (set of beliefs) to see a larger picture of life. That is, the reason(s) for our being on this planet. To sum up this point, religious knowledge broadens one's perspective of reality.

### Scientific or Empirical Knowledge

Knowledge of the visible world is acquired through the five senses and mental faculties. The five senses, i.e. sight, hearing, touch, taste and smell receive information when they come into contact with objects. Subsequently, the information is transmitted to the mind for analysis, categorization, judgment and storage [1]. This type of knowledge is called "sensory" or "empirical" knowledge. Empiricism is an ideology which claims that "knowledge comes primarily or exclusively from sense experience followed by a posteriori judgments: that is, statements which follow

previous sense experience" [31]. The main philosophers associated with Empiricism are John Locke (1632–1704 A.D.), George Berkeley (1685 – 1753 A.D.) and David Hume (1711 – 1776 A.D.) They argued that knowledge springs from experience alone and rejected the doctrine of Innatism; i.e. that human mind contains ideas/knowledge prior to having experience.

### Philosophical or Intellectual Knowledge

Contrasted with empiricism is rationalism, an ideology that claims that reason is the ultimate source of all knowledge and not sense experience and sensory perception. Rationalists are those who restrict knowledge to human thoughts and ideas; they believe that Man is the ultimate authority in knowledge and not God/god or the Scripture, and that knowledge is what enters the mind through the use of reasoning and not through the use of the senses as believed by Empiricist philosophers. Modern Rationalism is traced back to the French philosopher, René Descartes (1596–1650 A.D.). He believed that reason is the only source of knowledge. In his "Discourse on Method" (1637), Descartes argued, "Je pense, donc je suis. Cogito, ergo sum," a Latin statement which is translated into English as "*I think, therefore I am.*" It means: first, my ability to think is what assures me of my own existence. Whatever thinks, also exists; second, thinking is the essence or an inseparable attribute of a human being. Without it he/she ceases to exist. In his *Meditation II: On the Nature of the Human Mind, Which Is Better Known than the Body*, he wrote:

*"I have convinced myself that there is absolutely nothing in the world, no sky, no earth, no minds, no bodies. Does it now follow that I too do not exist? No: If I convinced myself of something then I certainly existed. But there is a deceiver of supreme power and cunning who is deliberately and constantly deceiving me. In that case I too undoubtedly exist, if he is deceiving me; and let him deceive me as much as he can, he will never bring it about that I am nothing so long as I think that I am something. So after considering everything very thoroughly, I must finally conclude that this proposition, I am, I exist, is necessarily true whenever it is put forward by me or conceived in my mind" [32].*

It is clear from the above that Descartes began by doubting the truth of everything, including his own existence. However, the fact that he could not doubt or deny is that he was doubting. Hence, the act of thinking or doubting implies the existence of a thinker or a doubter. To conclude, the statement 'I think, therefore, I am' is a defiance of skepticism (scepticism); the belief that there is no certainty or doubt. A skeptic is "one who doubts that certainty, knowledge, or perhaps even justified belief is possible" [33].

### The significance of worldview and its role in human life

It is not possible for a person or a community to lead a life without a worldview. A person's worldview is shaped by many things including the environment in which he/she lives, life experiences, religious or unreligious beliefs. Some worldviews are embedded in conscious mind while others are held in unconscious mind. The task of this work is to describe the importance of worldview and the role it plays in our lives.

First, it is natural for every person to have a worldview. We enter this world by way of birth and exit it by way of death. During our worldly existence we experience myriad of things. Hence, it is natural to wonder or ask the following fundamental questions: Where have we come from? Why are we here? Or what is the purpose of life? Where do we go when we die? And, why things happen the way they do? A worldview helps a person to find answers to these fundamental questions, discern between right and wrong, respond to life's challenges wisely and live a more meaningful and enjoyable life. The objective of worldview is to give "direction and meaning to one's life". It governs how he lives, defines why he lives and what he lives for. Hence, it is also known as a "vision of life" [7] and a "life-system."

Second, worldview is the yardstick by which truth and false, good and bad, beauty and ugliness, order and disorder are measured. It is the foundation, frame and hinge of human activities, e.g. thinking, knowing, doing, emotions and judgment of others.

Third, each worldview is likened to a pair of invisible coloured eyeglasses glass of different colour through which people see themselves and the kind of relationships they have with others, the universe/world around them and their place in it. Jeff Baldwin writes that,

*"If you choose the right pair of glasses, you can see everything vividly and can behave in sync with the real world. ... But if you choose the wrong pair of glasses, you may find yourself in a worse plight than the blind man - thinking you see clearly when in reality your vision is severely distorted" [34].*

Before choosing which pair of eyeglasses to put on, one should have a clear worldview understanding. Islam and other Abrahamic religions teach that if one's worldview is inconsistent with religious teaching, one should discard it and replace it with the right one.

Fourth, understanding a worldview is the key to understanding and interpreting people's lives, beliefs and practices. Every community and every individual have a worldview. Their worldview is their way of

looking at themselves, the relationships they have with others, the purpose of life and the world around them. A community's worldview is the backbone of their activities: "Worldview is at the most fundamental level of culture. It is the core, so to speak, and affects people's beliefs and practices [35]. If one could peel back the layers of a culture, starting with surface behavior, practices and custom, the deepest layer would be a people's worldview" [8]. Hence, understanding a community's worldview is key to understanding the community "far beyond surface level observation" [8]. Understanding a worldview is also of fundamental importance in understanding human relationships. Worldview is the basis of the community's activities and the "super-glue that binds (them) together and gives them a sense of identity and continuity, which is almost impenetrable" [36]. Additionally, understanding people's worldview helps a person or group of people to work with others better.

Fifth, worldview explains the greatest questions of humanity. It helps to answer the following important issues or profound questions:

- **GOD:** The issues this question raises involve whether there is God/god. The fundamental questions related to this issue are: What is God's nature? If there is no God/god then what is the origin of material reality?
- **WORLD:** The question of the world is about how we understand the world in which we live. The fundamental questions related to this issue are: Where did the world around us come from and what is its nature? Why the world is the way it is? When and how shall the world end? Is there another world? How can we know the world beyond our perception? What is humanity's relation to the world/universe?
- **MAN:** There are three fundamental questions that every Man must seek answers to. These are: Who am I? Where did I come from? Whither am I going? Finding the right answers to these questions is the key to happiness and contentment.
- **LIFE:** What we call a worldview of life or "lifeview" is the set of beliefs that form the basis for answering the basic questions of life. The fundamental questions in the worldview of life are: How did life originate? Why is life the way it is? What is the meaning and purpose of my life? Is there more to life than the "here and now"?
- **ETHICS:** Being ethical is one of the distinctive characteristics of a human being. The question of ethics is about how we should live; "what actions we should take, which rules govern our conduct (the moral standards that regulate actions and relations between societies and between individuals of different societies), what "right thing" we should do, and what we ought not to do" [37]. Every community has a set of principles or standards by which to judge right and wrong. The central

questions raised in regard to the issue of ethics are: What is right and what is wrong? How do I know what is right and wrong? Or, what is the basis of right and wrong? How should I treat others?

- **KNOWLEDGE:** The following are the fundamental questions related to knowledge: What is knowledge? What can we know? That is, what are the scope and limits of our knowledge? How do we know that we know? Is there such a thing as absolute truth or is all truth merely subjective?

It can be concluded from the above that worldview gives the terms of reference by which God or no-God, humans, life, ethics, world and knowledge are described.

Last but not least, answers to the questions of worldview set the foundation for answers to other issues. Last but by no means least, as mentioned previously, the questions of worldview are those questions which every human being wonders about. For this reason, it is important to find answers to the aforementioned questions. Answers to the questions of worldview set the foundation for answers to other issues. Additionally, they influence a person's thoughts (beliefs, opinions and attitudes), sayings and actions (behaviors) consciously or unconsciously.

#### **SUMMARY AND CONCLUSION**

In summary, the first section of this work described the different perspectives of reality. It must be noted that reality has been perceived, interpreted and understood from two perspectives, i.e. the higher and lower perspectives. Viewing reality from higher perspective enables a person or a group of people to see what those who view it from a lower perspective are incapable of seeing. Secondly, the reality or nature of the world is an ultimate truth that will always be, but the lens people see it through is what alters its perception. Hence, it is necessary to distinguish reality or the state of things as they actually exist from perception.

The second section described the nature and foundation of worldview. While there are many definitions of worldview, the simplest definition of it is, a lens of perception or filter that individuals and groups see, understand and interpret the world through. A person's worldview is the lens of his or her thoughts/perceptions, the basis of his or her knowledge and actions, the foundation upon which a person constructs the structure of his/her life. How a person views the world depends upon the type of lens through which he/she sees it; worldview vary from person to person or from community to community. Each individual or community consider their worldview real, true and comprehensive. Hence, according to postmodernism "no single worldview has the advantage of objectivity above the others" [12]. This means all worldviews are equally valid; there is no worldview

universally valid for all human beings: "When one realizes that there is a wide spectrum of worldviews, one can no longer consider any of the worldview traditions as universally valid for all humans" [12]. The same holds for ethics, culture and religion. This form of argument is at odds with Islam which teaches that "The Religion before Allah is Islam (submission to His Will)...." (Qur'an, 3:19) and "If anyone desires a religion other than Islam (submission to Allah, never will it be accepted of him; and in the Hereafter He will be in the ranks of those who have lost (All spiritual good)." (Qur'an, 3:85). It is also at odds with the idea of Western superiority; the belief that Western values are universally valid. Postmodernism is a way of thinking that rejects the notion that there is objective reality.

A person's worldview is shaped by his/her parents, close family members, school/education, culture, social interactions (environment or surrounding), religious or non-religious beliefs, experiences and media and it consists of their epistemology, metaphysics, cosmology, teleology, theology, anthropology and axiology.

Worldview is partly characterized both by the subject of knowledge or perception, that is, the knower or perceiver, and by the objects of knowledge or perception, or the things to be known or perceived, that is, the world around us. One of the fundamental questions in worldview is whether there is an inner meaning to life; i.e. the meaning beyond what we see (the shapes and colors). This study has classified the object of knowledge into sensory and non-sensory.

In describing worldview, one must distinguish between religious and non-religious worldviews. Religious worldviews provide answers to the questions of why we are here; how we should conduct ourselves while here; and what happens when we die and when/how the world will end. Worldview impacts everything in one's life. A person's ideas about God or god, life, world and value make up the content of worldview. They are also described as a person's theological, metaphysical, epistemological, cosmological, anthropological and ethical beliefs regarding: (1) the nature of God and His relation to the world (2) the origin, purpose and development of the universe (3) the ultimate nature of reality (4) the nature and purpose of man, and (5) the nature of value. The questions of worldview are the ones humankind has been asking since time immemorial. Answers to these questions to these questions have been provided mainly by religion, philosophy and science.

The third task of this work was to describe the significance of worldview and its role in human life. We said that everyone has a worldview that is unique to him or her. As mentioned above, a person's worldview is the conceptual lens through which he or she views the world and his or her role in it. From the worldview

flows everything about one's perceiving, thinking, knowing and doing. It is a structure within which one's perception, thoughts, knowledge and deeds exist and cultures are shaped. Changing one's worldview simply means changing one's glasses in order to be able to see the world from a different viewpoint.

How do we gain knowledge? This is one of the fundamental questions. This study has described three beliefs or attitudes related to this question, namely: Empiricism, rationalism is the claim that sense experience is the ultimate source of all knowledge. The compliment of empiricism and its opposite is rationalism, i.e. the belief that reason or intellect is the ultimate source of all knowledge. Both empiricism and rationalism have played a role in the construction and development of Western knowledge and the worldview of life.

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