Worldviews

A Comprehensive Approach to Knowing Self and Others

John Valk

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"With *Worldviews: A Comprehensive Approach to Knowing Self and Others*, John Valk persuasively articulates the need for more comprehensive worldview literacy. He presents a helpful framework for introducing people of all professions and disciplines to key aspects of worldviews and how to better understand them. Espousal of the principles therein will lead to more peaceful and productive human collaboration and flourishing."

—Ryan Gardner, *Professor of Religious Education,*
Brigham Young University-Idaho, USA

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An educated person should know about and have a feel for many things, but perhaps the most important is to have an understanding of some of the chief worldviews which have shaped and are now shaping human culture and action.

Ninian Smart
(1927–2001)
Worldviews: Cross-Cultural Explorations of Human Beliefs
New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1983, p. 6

To my mother
Sheila (Sijbrigje) Valk-Gerkema
(1915–2016)
who encouraged reading,
knowing that it might open up vast new worlds—
even new worldviews.

Preface

This book had its beginnings many years ago, though the idea of it was unknown to me at that time. But after a decade and more of teaching, researching, and writing short pieces about worldviews, it became apparent to me that I was heading in this direction. New territory, thoughts, and ideas were opening themselves up, and they eventually needed a book to spell them all out.

For twenty years now I have taught a course entitled *Worldviews, Religions and Cultures.* In vain I searched for a suitable textbook amongst the myriad on offer. I could not find one. They were often too focused on one theme or another, insufficient either in breadth or in depth, or exclusive of certain important categories of worldviews to suit my purposes. My previous writings on worldviews stressed the need to be inclusive—of both religious and secular worldviews—rather than focus on one category or the other. I sought an approach that would be comparative of both worldviews, so that clear parallels could be seen between the two, rather than see only religious worldviews as having, for example, metanarratives, teachings, symbols, rituals, and more. I sought an approach that would reveal that secular worldviews are far from neutral and are themselves journeys of faith and exploration. I sought an approach—a worldview framework—that would include ultimate questions, ontological and epistemological matters, universal principles, and more. These endeavours slowly developed over the past decade or so of teaching. The result is this book.

An understanding of worldview is no small thing, even though the word is often bandied about as if we all knew exactly what it meant. This is far from the case. An understanding of worldview needs to be nuanced, with a variety of aspects to be taken into consideration, each assisted by insights from a variety of academic disciplines. In this case those aspects actually became chapters, each exploring at considerable length all that is involved in the concept of worldview. As such, this book is a comprehensive approach.

Worldviews are also not just something to be studied *out there*, as it were—frameworks of understanding, perspectives, beliefs, values, and more that may shape and influence a society or culture or that others may hold and can be examined objectively and at a distance. Worldviews are not just something that may define certain institutions or that other people embrace. We all individually or collectively have a worldview—of some kind. We all look at the world, and act in it, in one way or another. We are not just detached observers. We can indeed reflect on the beliefs, views, values, and actions of others but doing so inevitably engages us as well. We ourselves are invariably drawn in—what do we think about all of these matters? As such, this book also invites the reader to explore their own worldview, as they explore those of others.

Numerous opportunities availed themselves over the years in presenting certain aspects and sections of this book both nationally and internationally. Presentations on the theoretical justification for a book of this nature were made at both the *International Seminar for Religious Education and Values* and the *Religious Education Association* conferences over a number of years. Linking worldviews and leadership were made possible through a number of presentations at the *International Leadership Association* conferences. Linking worldviews and inclusive education were made possible in annually teaching for a decade now, and in modular form, students in the Inclusive Education Programme at the Protestant University of Applied Sciences (Darmstadt, Germany). I thank them and their instructors for their involvement and engagement as they came to see how worldviews also impacted this area of inquiry. In five workshops over a period of four years I presented aspects of the worldview framework as it applied to Islam to a group of scholars at Ankara University. I thank them for their involvement as we worked collaboratively to see how the framework expanded an understanding of Islam for them, all of which resulted

in the book *An Islamic Worldview from Turkey: Religion in a Modern, Secular and Democratic State* (Palgrave Macmillan, 2017). Aspects and themes emanating from the book were also presented in various other academic settings: Vrije Universiteit Amsterdam, Catholic University of Applied Sciences (Freiberg), University of Bonn, Catholic University of Eichstatt, University of Passau, Goethe University (Frankfurt), University of Heidelberg, University of Helsinki, Diaconia University of Applied Sciences (Helsinki), Umeå University (Sweden), University of South Africa (Pretoria), Baylor University (Waco, Texas); Calvin University (Grand Rapids, Michigan), The King's University (Edmonton, Alberta), and Dalhousie University (Halifax, Nova Scotia). But contents of the book have been presented most fully to my students at Renaissance College, University of New Brunswick (Fredericton, New Brunswick). It was they who listened patiently, engaged enthusiastically, asked insightful questions, and made critical comments during class sessions over the past twenty years, and as a result sharpened my arguments. To them I owe a great debt and am most thankful. Lastly, I owe gratitude to Renaissance College and the University of New Brunswick for granting me two sabbaticals to do more intensive research and writing that eventually led to this book.

The writing of a book can be a lonely journey. One often faces an empty screen, with a head full of ideas but not always finding quite the right way to articulate them. With perseverance, however, words do eventually spill on the screen, and from there something slowly takes form. Yet, while the actual writing of a book can be a lonely experience, it is never done without conversations, engagements, and involvements with others, in greater or lesser degrees and in various ways. In that vein, I owe much to a number of people who listened to what I had to say as I was thinking about and actually writing my book, who invited me to give presentations on portions of my book, who offered helpful questions and comments, who were intrigued by what I was saying and created new possibilities in new areas, who assisted in some of my sabbatical travels, or who simply provided a time and space for me to quietly do my writing. In no particular order, and apologies to those I will inevitably overlook, I would like to thank in particular the following: Anne-Dore Stein, Mualla Selçuk, Halis Albayrak, Aybiçe Tosun, Siebren Miedema, Ryan Gardner, Saila Poulter, David Koerts, Antoni van Dijk, John Rogers (Auckland), Steenkamps (Auckland),

Anne-Marie Holtzhausen-Visser (Mossel Bay, South Africa), Helen Nugteren (Christchurch), Betsy and Jaap van de Poll (Hattem, Netherlands), Henk Bruggeman (Hattem, Netherlands), and more. I also wish to thank two anonymous reviewers who offered very helpful suggestions on strengthening the manuscript—you are not forgotten. Lastly, I owe a great debt also to my immediate family members (Ellie Valk-Horst, John-Harmen, Nathaniel, Michael, Kieran) who over the years accompanied me in one form or another in my writing journey and who are not yet, I hope, tired of hearing the term *worldview*.

Fredericton, NB, Canada   John Valk
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Introduction

Quite some time ago an essay published in the *Association of Universities and Colleges of Canada* made some observations that linked the arms of two formidable forces in the Western world: educational and corporate cultures (AUCC, 2003; Bok, 2004; Washburn, 2005). Three things were mentioned in that essay. One, an Ekos Research poll indicated that a "cosmopolitan worldview" was rated by Canadian business executives as "one of the top three skills needed by corporate leaders". Two, business and community leaders felt that studies abroad would be an excellent opportunity for students to gain such a worldview. Three, a report by Goldfarb consultants stated that study abroad enhanced, among other things, "a more open and tolerant attitude, and increased cross-cultural sensitivity and knowledge" (AUCC, 2003, p. 2). Other reports and studies have further amplified the value of exposure to cultures different than one's own (Gunesch, 2004; Adams et al., 2011; Yelich Biniecki & Conceição, 2014).

As a result, many universities have implemented study abroad programmes in the past decade or two, recognizing the numerous benefits they bestow on students. Openness, a more tolerant attitude, increased cultural sensitivity, and knowledge of others are today considered a necessity for living in the global world. Universities can assist students in gaining all of these by their study abroad programmes. However, these programmes also run the risk of exposing students to little more than superficial differences in dress, social customs, and cultural preferences, as

valuable as these may nonetheless be for students, corporate leaders, or others. But to be of real value one must get beyond what Skelton et al. (2002) termed a "foods, festivals and flags" outcome. A "cosmopolitan worldview" must consist of more.

Universities through their various programmes educate students for more than corporate leadership; they educate them for life. Higher education is, according to Moreland and Craig (2003), "the single most important institution shaping Western culture" (p. 2.). Educating students in a "cosmopolitan worldview" then becomes essential. But what is a "cosmopolitan worldview"? Of what does it consist? How should public schooling teach a "cosmopolitan worldview", or any worldview for that matter?

Education is about *formation* as much as it is about *information*, neither of which is value free (Hauerwas, 2007). According to J.K.A. Smith (2009), "behind every pedagogy is a philosophical anthropology; behind every constellation of educational practices is a set of assumptions about the nature of human persons" (p. 27). Not even science education or research is worldview neutral (Marsden & Longfield, 1992; Kuhn, 1970). Mitroff and Kilman (1978) argue that the "selection of any particular experimental design is not automatic but is a function of one's worldview as well as a response to particular technical requirements" (p. 47). Hence, the teaching about worldviews becomes important, regardless of the level and the discipline in which students are exposed to them (Valk, 2007; Van der Kooij et al., 2013).

The term "worldview" is used extensively in an increasingly wide array of disciplines. It is used in the humanities: in philosophy (Pepper, 1942; Naugle, 2002; Sire, 2004a, 2004b; Marshall et al., 1989), religious studies/theology (Peterson, 2001; Olthuis, 1985; Tillich, 1957), sociology (Smith, 2011), psychology (Nilsson, 2013; Webb, 2009; Koltko-Rivera, 2004), anthropology (Hiebert, 2008; Smart, 1983; Kearney, 1975, 1984; Geertz, 1957, 1973; Redfield, 1952), education (Van der Kooij et al., 2013; Bonzo & Stevens, 2009; McKenzie, 1991), leadership studies (Chin et al., 2018; Auxier, 2015; Valk, 2010, 2013; Valk et al., 2011; Wallace, 2007; Kriger et Seng, 2005; Visser, 2005), and more. It surfaces in the sciences, especially in physics and biology (DeWitt, 2018; Capra, 2010; Goetz & Taliaferro, 2008; Borchardt, 2006; Orr, 2006; Kuhn, 1970), as well as in nursing (Kikuchi, 2003; Fawcett, 1993). It surfaces in economics, where we hear of a capitalist worldview, a consumerist worldview, a socialist worldview, and even a Bhutanese "Gross National Happiness" worldview (Cox, 2016; Loy, 1997; Zsolnai, 2011;

Nelson, 2001; Schaumacher, 1989; Wexler, 2006). One reads of worldviews even in newspaper articles and opinion pieces. It is now also a name given to a new constellation of earth observation satellites called *WorldView Legion*, which is replacing ageing *Worldview 1* and *Worldview 2* satellites. Hence, worldview is not an unfamiliar term. But it is not always clear what is meant by it for it is often ill-defined, vaguely defined, or imprecisely defined. How then should it be understood? What constitutes a worldview? What does it encompass; what is its scope and nature? What are its implications and applications? Does this term or concept increase our understanding of the human—of human beliefs, values, and behaviours?

The term *worldview* first surfaced in the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries in the writings of German philosophers, as David Naugle (2002) nicely illustrated in his landmark book on worldviews. Naugle traced the early history of this term from Kant (1724–1804), who first coined the term Weltanschauung in 1790, to Hegel (1770–1831), who understood it to mean "ways of living and looking at the universe", to the Danish philosopher Soren Kierkegaard (1813–55), for whom worldview or life view was "a deep and satisfying view of life that would enable him to become a total human being", to Wilhelm Dilthey (1833–1911), known as the "father of worldview theory" (Naugle, 2002, pp. 59, 70, 75).

The concept of worldviews arose to give legitimacy to the rich variety of cultures within human history. Dilthey recognized that characteristic of humans was a great need to find answers to life's ultimate or existential questions—meaning and purpose of life, nature of the human, beginnings and endings of life, existence of a power or being greater than humans, and more. He came to realize, however, that people would respond to these ultimate questions from their own cultural or subjective, and hence changeable, perspective. This was seen as an affront to classical rationalist philosophy, which attempted to reduce all cultural and subjective differences, believing that cultural plurality resulted in violence, with one culture inevitably suppressing others. Only a society based on reason, it was argued, would lead to peace and happiness—an implicit promise of progress. Overcoming worldview plurality was deemed necessary to establish "a unified society built on the absolute and general truths of philosophical reason"; different worldview perspectives revealed only narrowness of knowledge and ideas (Marshall et al., 1989, p. 121). But while rationalists "sought absolute and general truths of reality", they were increasingly challenged by the fact that those truths often conflicted with the "social and political reality of the day" (Marshall et al., 1989, p. 124). One

overarching picture of reality—a master narrative—became problematic. An absolute, universal metanarrative, or master narrative, even one based largely on the Judeo-Christian story, came to be contested by an emerging historicism. An absolute response to life's existential questions that was universally applicable could no longer be demonstrated philosophically, nor with ultimate rational certainty (Naugle, 2002; Bulhof, 1980). Dilthey came to recognize that different "life stories" not only set their priorities differently but also competed against each other. Their truth claims could be neither proven nor disproven and, viewed historically, became relative (Marshall et al., 1989). Dilthey began to analyse and compare various life stories in their narrative, doctrinal, symbolic, and ritual forms. Much could be learned from them that rendered insight into the nature of the human and the cosmos.

A number of implications can be drawn from Dilthey's thoughts. First, worldviews are linked to identity; they speak of who we are. Our identity is impacted by our surroundings and circumstances, which influence who we are and how we see the world and act in it. Our familial, social, cultural, economic, linguistic, and ethnic backgrounds shape us—how we view the world and act in it. We are products of our environment and our upbringing, even if we are not defined by them. It is from the world in which we live and act that we first begin to develop a view of that world. Our worldview is our "picture of the way things, in their sheer actuality are, [our] concept of nature, of self, of society. It contains [our] most comprehensive ideas of order" (Geertz, 1957, pp. 421–422). Our view of the world becomes a "framework of understanding" the world in which we live and the way that we live in it (Taylor, 1989).

Second, coming to understand our worldview involves some cognition. We think and ponder on our world and our place in it, invariably touching on some of life's ultimate or existential questions: meaning and purpose, nature of the human, right and wrong, and more. These questions are largely the domain of philosophers, theologians, and writers, yet they do not escape the purview of the ordinary person. We reflect, to greater or lesser degrees, on our living in the world in order to make sense of our lives and to give meaning to what we do. In that sense, our worldview— our view of the reality in which we live—can be expansive or cognitively limited.

Third, worldviews lead us to assess, judge, or evaluate the world in light of narratives we embrace, teachings to which we adhere, social institutions to which we belong, circumstances in which we live, and experiences we

undertake. They also influence the manner in which we assess, judge, and evaluate others: their situations, their narratives, their teachings, and their social institutions. They aid in the manner in which we respond to crises we face, dilemmas we encounter, and uncertainties we confront. They assist in centring us, in making sense of the world in which we live, and its history, and in giving meaning or purpose to life. Worldviews become the frameworks or sources to assist in recognizing and articulating identities (Taylor, 1989).

Fourth, worldviews involve actions and behaviours. The way that people view the world influences the way people live in the world. A worldview shapes the conscious or unconscious decisions and choices people make in their lives. What people do reveal their passions, interests, and emphases, sometimes in spite of what they say. Actions and behaviours disclose what they feel is important; often exposing their preferences, desires, or wishes (J.K.A. Smith, 2009; Harvey, 2013; C. Smith, 2017). It is also known that actions and behaviours can be erratic, irrational, and even unintentional—humans are not always consistent either in their views or in their behaviours.

Dilthey recognized that worldviews are comprehensive; they encompass all of our experienced reality. He attributed to philosophy the task of making sense of that experienced reality. Philosophy interprets the experience of life and worldviews are the "interpretations of reality". The philosopher articulates or brings to consciousness the worldview depicted by religious or secular thought, artistic expression, or cultural symbols (Bulhof, 1980, p. 86). Dilthey argued for a philosophical study of worldviews, one that would look at how various individuals or groups of individuals pictured their understanding of the reality they experience, recognizing that each reality is different.

It is here that numerous debates have continued in the last century or more with greater or lesser degrees of intensity. At issue is whether the nature of reality can be comprehended with any degree of certainty or truth using particular methodologies, approaches, or systems. Griffioen (2012) points to the helpful distinction in the German language between weltbild and weltanschauung. Weltbild is a more neutral term that refers to a picture of the world, a taken for granted, common outlook depicting or describing nature or the cosmos. Hence, at various stages of history people have spoken of Ptolemaic, Newtonian, or Darwinian explanations of the world or the universe. Weltanschauung, on the other hand, refers more to a world orientation, a truth claim about the world that cannot be

proven rationally or scientifically, but is ascribed or adhered to as a matter of personal conviction. This leads to a plurality of truth claims, with no one commonly shared fundamental orientation. Dilthey and the Rationalists recognized this would lead to struggles between competing orientations; orientations that can easily develop into political ideologies, such as Marxism, Communism, or Liberalism (Marshall et al., 1989).

Enlightenment thinking led to a number of truth claims that sparred with others as well as each other. It marked a radical shift from a worldview that placed God at the centre to one that put humans there—as autonomous selves. Descartes' *cogito ergo sum* laid the philosophical groundwork for exploring the mysteries of the universe in order to better control human life within it. A sure means to do so, it was argued, was to dispense with metaphysical speculation and focus on the objectively verifiable, namely the empirical sciences. Hume was one of the first to argue that metaphysics—contemplation of that which might lie beyond or behind the natural world, a transcendent realm, essence, or Being—was little more than futile conjecture, for only through the empirical can any sense of certainty be gained. Only reason and science, it was argued, could generate objective truth about the nature of reality—our understanding of self and the world. Such became the relentless pursuit of Modernism, which rendered other truth claims about the nature of reality and the universe in which we live, such as those advocated by various religions and theologies, to little more than views, opinions, or worse, illusions (Dworkin, 2013; Grayling, 2013a; Myers, 2013; Dawkins, 2006). Theology as queen of the sciences was toppled from an academic pedestal it had occupied for centuries and replaced by science and reason. Science and reason became the new truth claim or "religion" of the modern period, with scientists as the new clergy able to explain human existence and individual behaviours, as most audaciously claimed by the father of Positivism, Auguste Comte (1789–1857). In essence, reason and science became the new grand narrative, with a new "grand design" able to potentially penetrate even the "mind of God" (Hawking, 1998; Hawking & Mlodinow, 2012; Lewontin, 1991).

Postmodernism refuted such notions and claims to truth. It rejected Modernism and its supreme confidence in reason and science. It claimed that reason and science are seldom impartial; scientific theories rest on some implicit or explicit philosophical foundation (Babbage & Ronan, 2000; Landau, 1995). As the philosopher of science Michael Polanyi (1962) put it, "complete objectivity as usually attributed to the exact

sciences is a delusion and is in fact a false ideal" (p. 18). According to Foucault and Rainbow (1984), reason and science are frequently in the service of some wider interests, most particularly that of ruling elites. Postmodernism recognized that knowledge has its limitations; a grand theory of everything may just be a modernist illusion. In that way Postmodernism opened the door again for non-rational ways of knowing and a place for the life of the spirit, which in turn paved the way for numerous modern-day spiritualities. It has also given space to an increasing new phenomenon, or category, referred to lately as "nones"—the so-called non-religious, and includes "godless mysticisms", "religion without god", atheistic searches for some immanent "life force", or even those claiming a "deeper worldview"—a kind of "religious atheism" (Gray, 2014; Ehrenreich, 2014; Dworkin, 2013).

Postmodernism argued in general against any grand narratives, secular as well as religious. Nietzsche claimed that there is not one truth but rather alternative truths; mutually exclusive approaches to life: "subjective projections, linguistic customs, habituated thinking, and reified cultural models" (Naugle, 2002, p. 102). Social constructionism, as an offshoot from postmodernism, and especially its "strong" version, argues that all of reality and all truth is shaped by our socio-cultural contexts: reality and truth is a human, social construction and our knowledge of that reality is entirely culturally relative (Burr, 2015). To argue that reality and truth are entirely socially constructed—shaped by our social-cultural contexts—is, of course, debatable. What is not debatable, however, is that we are all situated, we all bring to the fore some preconceived notion of the world. We all live by some faith of some kind, whether that be secular or religious, as the postmodernist Jacques Derrida (1993) and others came to recognize (Dworkin, 2013; Wood, 2009).

Many postmodernists abandoned the quest for a unified theory of objective reality, yet did not, however, argue for relativism, claiming that one view or way of life is as good as another. While they affirmed that there was no absolute truth, there was truth that enhanced the well-being of the communities to which people belonged. It called humans to a life of responsibility and justice in light of the narratives out of which they lived. The postmodern struggle became one of acknowledging evil and suffering and seeking freedom and justice for all, recognizing that some worldviews do not promote justice, tend towards exclusion, and fuel discontent and greed (Dworkin, 2013). Yet, it is not clear that Postmodernism has escaped its own predicament. While it placed responsibility at the

centre of human living, it has become so mesmerized by the human condition and its penchant for evil and injustices, it is unable to escape it, overwhelmed by the fear that "finally, we live only by Chance, and in the end, there is only death" (Olthuis, 2012, p. 6; Grenz, 1996).

So the dilemma continues unabated, if not with even greater intensity. There are still those who claim to be objective, rational, or scientific, as exemplified by the "new atheists", some of whom are more vociferous about this than others (Silverman, 2015). Yet, they find themselves faced with the same predicament; they have not escaped orienting themselves or grounding themselves in particular philosophical or worldview presuppositions. Richard Dawkins (2006) and Daniel Dennett (2005), for example, are severe critics of the grand narratives of religion. But in reducing religion to its most simplistic form, almost unrecognizable by those who consider themselves religious, they then feel confident and justified in rejecting it, concluding that it can render no truth for it is not sufficiently rational or scientific. They assume, as did others before them, that reason and science will eventually reveal all that is true, yet do they not fail to recognize or admit their own starting points in a rational or scientific worldview (Eagleton, 2006; Midgely, 1992)? But others no less argue in a similar vein. Sire (2004a, 2004b) and Naugle (2002), for example, maintain that a Christian worldview is logically defensible, even in a postmodernist age. While this may indeed be the case, it is nonetheless argued from that very worldview perspective.

In all of this a fundamental problem can hardly be avoided: ultimate certainty about the nature of reality or the universe in which we live eludes the human condition. Instead, we are confronted with multiple views or worldviews, as Dilthey earlier recognized. Each argues to the best of their ability the validity of their own perspective: in essence, worldviews are largely argued *from* rather than argued *to*. Worldviews lay claim to an ultimate truth. They are rooted in what a person believes to be a true picture of the reality in which one lives: truth about life, existence on earth, what is meaningful, important, and worthwhile, how one judges right and wrong, and more. Yet, ultimate commitments reach inevitably beyond the limits of experience, reason, science, even revelation. Worldviews are inevitably and finally grounded in a faith claim; when reason is ultimately exhausted. No amount of rational, logical, or scientific argumentation will ultimately render the truth of a worldview—it is finally accepted on faith and lived out in faith. No amount of rational, logical, or scientific argumentation will, for example, establish beliefs in the existence or

non-existence of God, or of life after this life. Lack of rational or scientific evidence for such beliefs does not establish non-existence, for as the well-known British astrophysicist Martin Rees reminded us "absence of evidence is not evidence of absence". One ultimately surrenders to such a belief, and lives out of that belief, whether that belief is religiously, spiritually, or secularly grounded. Even though one must necessarily employ rational, logical, and scientific powers in assessing their beliefs and their behaviours, these powers inevitably exhaust themselves in establishing what is ultimately true. Faith itself is required to affirm that reason, logic, or science provides the ultimate framework for understanding all of reality and life's experiences. A faith commitment to science as the final and ultimate arbiter of truth, for example, must come from outside of science itself: "the one thesis for which there can be in principle no scientific evidence is the thesis that only scientific evidence counts" (Revel & Ricard, 1998, p. xiv). According to Ninian Smart (1983), what is presented as the truth of a worldview inescapably emerges from "what experience can show, what reason can demonstrate and what revelation can uncover" (p. 36), but perhaps ultimately a worldview grounds itself in a non-rational or extra-rational commitment to that truth.

Issues of faith surface most frequently in regard to religious worldviews. These worldviews are expressed and articulated in statements codified in scriptures, doctrines, or articles of faith, affirming that which is believed to be the nature of the divine, of physical reality, of the human situation, as well as moral obligations and responsibilities, and more. But these are no less elaborated also in numerous secular worldviews. Communism, Marxism, Humanism, Nationalism, and Liberalism each have their own doctrines, "sacred" texts, beliefs, rituals, and ways of life, and are at times referred to as surrogate or quasi religions (Kainz, 2006; Smith, 1994; Smart, 1983). It takes as strong a faith, some might be inclined to say even more faith, to claim these secular worldviews as the only true paths to justice, healing, and happiness for the human community.

Humans are creators; we create things, ideas, stories (narratives), experiences, and legacies. What we create also speaks to our worldview. Our creations address or speak to some of the deepest realities of our lives: poetry, art, the novel, architecture. Humans also create, develop, and construct a "worldview", a "view of life", something that assists them in making sense of the world in which they live: we all seek to compose/dwell in some conviction of what is ultimately true. We consciously/unconsciously compose a sense of the ultimate character of reality and articulate it in

beliefs or belief systems. Every worldview is composed of beliefs or belief systems that ground it: "beliefs are the building blocks of a worldview" (Olsen et al., 1992, p. 2). Some are well thought out and systematically interrelated, gaining credibility as a result. Others can be quite unrelated and even incongruous, eroding credibility. Worldviews can also lead to emotional anxiety and imbalance in individuals, and socio-economic injustices and oppression in groups, communities, or nations: "worldviews easily become ideologies when they rationalize or disguise injustice and oppression" (Olthuis, 1985, p. 159).

Worldviews are not, however, exclusively or even ultimately about views—about beliefs or belief systems of one kind or another. They are also about the kinds of actions or behaviours that relate to those beliefs or beliefs systems, for beliefs are intimately related to behaviours. Here it is difficult to determine whether beliefs influence behaviours or behaviours influence beliefs; whether a worldview, that is, a view of the world, is shaped by beliefs or by other behaviours. J.K.A. Smith (2009) argues that it is best to see what people *do*, rather than what they *say*, to determine their worldview. Worldviews according to Smith are more about actions and behaviours than they are about articulated views or visions of life. Graham Harvey (2013) makes a similar claim about religion or religious worldviews; they are more about practice than belief. Christian Smith (2017) argues that religion is primarily about practices and not beliefs. The Abrahamic religions place great importance on ritual behaviours. Reader and Tanabe (1998) make the point that for the Japanese, religious rituals are more central and important than religious beliefs or doctrines. Japanese are more inclined to engage in numerous religious rituals and less inclined to think about or engage in debate or discussion about the beliefs associated with those rituals. According to J.K.A. Smith (2009), people "worship what they desire" and this is exemplified by their behaviours and actions. That worship can as easily concern the God of Christianity, Judaism, and Islam as it can the "gods" of Capitalism (Cox, 2016), Consumerism (Smith, 2009; Miles, 2006; Gill, 1999), Nationalism (Brubaker, 2012), sport (Bauer, 2008), and even psychology (Vitz, 1994). People embrace what they "worship" more in terms of their behaviours and actions than in terms of their espoused beliefs and doctrines, because their worldview speaks or appeals to them, and responds to their desires, innate or otherwise.

It is not possible, therefore, to keep the two separate and distinct; beliefs and values and behaviours and actions are inextricably intertwined.

While the ubiquitous term "worldview" may lend itself to give more priority to a focus on "views", the above indicates that more is involved. Viewing the world, whether consciously or unconsciously, is but one aspect of a multi-dimensional way of being in the world. A worldview influences how we live and comes to expression in the way that we live, which is the point argued by J.K.A. Smith. At the same time, how we live our lives in the world finds expression in the articulations, justifications, and beliefs that encompass our view of the world. One might say that one's life is a "worldview in action", for humans are as much "viewers" as they are "actors". Having said this, however, this book will focus largely, though not exclusively, on how individuals, groups of individuals, communities, and cultures articulate their worldviews—their perspectives—as these are derived from the beliefs and values they embrace and how those beliefs and values influence and are influenced by behaviours and actions as they live their lives. As such, emphasis will largely fall on worldviews as perspectives—beliefs, belief systems, tenets, views, and values. Nonetheless, it will in places highlight specific actions that have been a direct result of articulated perspectives.

There is a temptation to see the vast array of worldviews as little more than a relativism—multiple worldviews all relatively the same, with one free to pick and choose which fits best, with none more important, true, or relevant than any other. Some may indeed feel that one can simply pick a worldview from an array that presents itself in some smorgasbord fashion "out there". But such is hardly the case. We do not approach worldviews from a neutral or detached position or perspective. We are already embedded, established, or invested in a way of life, along with a way of viewing it, long before we become consciously aware of it, and certainly before we become able to fully articulate what it all entails. It is also not uncommon for individuals to come to embrace beliefs, values, and behaviours different than those in which they were raised as children. The secularization process certainly has revealed the changing of particular beliefs, belief systems, and behaviours, but that trading in of one system of beliefs and their accompanying behaviours for another is hardly done whimsically, as if it really does not matter. Deliberate choices are made, for even inactive participation in rituals once engaged in is a deliberate choice. Perhaps one can or will *opt out* more easily than one can or will *opt in*, but it is hardly the case that one opts out or in because all worldviews are relatively the same. As such, worldview relativism ultimately carries little weight, and it does so for at least three further reasons.

First, at times worldviews are perceived superficially as little more than varying tastes in holy days, rituals, symbols, and teachings, just as cultures sometimes are perceived superficially as little more than varying tastes in clothing, food, or music. As such they are seen as little more than differences relative to or conditioned by culture, time, and place, with one no more able to assert truth claims than another. Yet, we are not satisfied with perceiving differences as merely relative in all instances. Upon closer scrutiny it becomes clear that religious worldviews in their essences are clearly distinct from secular worldviews. Religious worldviews open themselves up to transcendent possibilities, a sacred reality beyond the mundane of the ordinary—a "place of fullness" beyond the "flatness" of ordinary life, according to Taylor (2007, p. 6). They claim that humans are by nature inclined to seek fulfilment beyond the here and the now, even as they affirm the goodness of life in it (Volf, 2015). No doubt religious worldviews are influenced or conditioned by time and place, as are secular worldviews, yet the two are clearly distinct from each other. Secular worldviews are embedded in the *saeculum*, the here and the now, and seek in it their "place of fullness", whether that place is sought within oneself, one's lived experience with others, or within the realm of nature. They too can open themselves up to paradigms of transcendence, going beyond the mundane of the ordinary, those for which Marx and others also struggled, even if those notions of transcendence were of a nature quite different than that of most religious worldviews.

Second, perhaps there is an even stronger reason why worldview relativism does not ultimately hold: no one actually believes it. While many may acknowledge that certain practices are culture-, time-, and place-bound, few will argue that their worldview, religious or secular, is no different than others or is simply interchangeable (Prothero, 2010). Consciously or unconsciously, people affirm their worldview by living it, as J.K.A. Smith (2009) makes clear, and in the particular contexts in which they live. Because worldviews can be dynamic, certain changes in views and behaviours are only natural, but that is different than changing one's worldview wholesale. Most do not readily change their worldview perspectives even if alternatives exist. Hence, those who insist that worldviews, religious or secular, are all relatively the same do not, to blend the sentiments of Prothero and Gandhi, know their worldviews, religious or secular (Gandhi, 1993).

Third, worldview relativism or even the strong version of social constructionism collapses under its own weight, ontologically and epistemologically. There is a significant difference between the world in which we

live and our interpretation or belief about that world: the two are not the same (Smith, 2011; Searle, 1995; Berger & Luckmann, 1967). Worldviews have to do with our beliefs or interpretations about the world in which we live and the manner in which we live in it. They are therefore powerful and persuasive, and they are defended at great length. Plural societies may include people from a variety of worldview perspectives, but few in those societies consciously switch from one worldview perspective to another without some considerable thought if not turmoil.

Of what then do worldviews consist and how do they exercise such influence in shaping our views and actions? We might begin with some preliminary definitions of a worldview. Worldviews have been described as "world hypotheses" (Pepper, 1942; Hayes et al., 1988), "cultural orientations" (Kluckhohn, 1950), "philosophies of life" (Jung, 1954), "world outlooks" (Maslow, 1970), "comprehensive frameworks" (Wolters, 1985), "mental lenses" (Olsen et al., 1992), "sets of beliefs and assumptions" (Koltko-Rivera, 2004), and more. Worldviews are frameworks by which we understand ourselves, others, and the world in which we live. They are the integrative and interpretative frameworks by which order and disorder are judged, and the standard by which reality is managed and pursued.

According to Olthuis (1985), worldviews are views of life. They are the way we view or see the world—"a frame or set of fundamental beliefs through which we view the world and our calling and future in it" (p. 155). Sire (2004b) says they are a "set of presuppositions (or assumptions) which hold (consciously or subconsciously) about the makeup of our world" (p. 17). Huston Smith (2001) speaks of worldviews in terms of "the Big Picture". Paul Tillich refers to worldviews as framed by our "ultimate concerns", as one's highest principles, ideals, or values. Marxists tend to refer to worldviews as ideology and believe that a worldview can easily become ideology (Kearney, 1984). Lewontin (1991) makes the case for "biology as ideology". Social scientists frequently speak of worldviews as systems of values. Whatever terms or phrases are used to capture the meaning of a worldview, it is generally understood that the term encapsulates some sense of worldview as a framework by which we make sense of our existence.

According to J.K.A. Smith (2009), however, worldviews are more than views of life. They are about the way we live our lives. What we do reveals what is important to us; what we are passionate about. The manner in which we *live* in the world speaks as much, if not more, than about the way we *think* about the world. Marx argued that the manner in which we live

in the world shapes and influences how we think about the world. Smith's (2009) criticism of the use of the term worldview is that its focus is largely on beliefs and values or thoughts and ideas about our world as embraced by individuals or groups of individuals. At stake for him is not a set of beliefs but a way of life: "our ultimate love/desire is shaped by practices, not by ideas that are merely communicated to us" (p. 27). He feels that all too often worldview talk "exhibits a fairly 'heady' or cognitive picture of the human person" (p. 24). He argues that it is more likely that a way of life will reveal, betray, or even give shape to a view of life—people vote with their feet. Worldviews have to do with the way we act and live in the world.

Sire, in his earlier works, focused largely on worldviews as different sets of beliefs and propositions. In his later works, he recognized that because worldviews are also lived out in practice, they also have to do with ways of life, not merely beliefs and ideas. Olthuis (1985) at times places emphasis on worldviews as largely focusing on beliefs, ideas, and faith: "basic differences among people are always in the end reducible to differences in ideas and the commitment of faith articulated in these ideas" (p. 154). Yet, he does link the two, recognizing that incongruities often exist between what we profess our beliefs and values to be and how we live them out in our lives. That is, views of life may or may not correspond well to what becomes ways of life. More precise, therefore, would be to recognize a reciprocal relationship existing between them. Perhaps anticipating Smith's criticism of the concept of worldview, Olthuis states that a worldview is "fundamentally an activity of faith" (p. 4). It is less about right thinking and more about right living.

According to Olthuis (1985), worldviews are individual in nature, but communal in scope and structure when common visions bind adherents together in community (pp. 155–56). Those communities can be highly systematized, organized, and structured, as is often found in religious or spiritual communities, yet they can also be more loosely knit, nebulous and fluid, such as Atheism, Humanism, and Individualism. Worldviews can define a society or a nation, such as Communist China, Buddhist Bhutan, and Islamic Saudi Arabia, yet also delineate a way of thinking and acting that has a larger global reach, such as Capitalism and Consumerism. Yet ultimately worldviews are individual in nature; all individual persons have some view of life intertwined with a way of life that defines or characterizes them, however well they are able to give articulation to their worldview. No two people are the same, however much they may be

linked, associated, or related to each other; we are all ultimately unique individuals, possessing our own individual views and behaviours.

Comprehending and understanding our own individual worldview may not be an easy undertaking. We are complex creatures. But we are also creatures with reflective powers, seeking to understand ourselves; why we think the way that we do and why we act the way that we do, either individually or collectively. Just as we strive for emotional intelligence (Goldman, 2005), social intelligence (Goldman, 2007), even spiritual intelligence (Zohar & Marshall, 1999) to understand ourselves better, seeking to gain worldview intelligence or literacy is yet one more way to comprehend more fully who we are as individuals, groups, societies, and entities.

Coming to a better understanding of our own individual worldview cannot be done in isolation or in a vacuum; it must be done in conjunction with others or as a backdrop to others. The German-born philologist Max Müller (1823–1900) stated that "he who knows one, knows none" (Müller, 1873, p. 17). That is, a more comprehensive understanding and even probing of our own beliefs, values, and behaviours occurs when we probe at the same time the beliefs, values, and behaviours of others. Questions we ask of others in essence also become questions asked of the self. Understanding and comprehending our own worldview is often broadened and deepened when done in comparison and contrast to others. This process serves to question or probe why we do certain things or believe and value them, without simply taking things for granted as if they are self-evident. While clear answers may not always arise or be apparent, it does reveal that we often do things and believe or value certain things because of the circumstances and situations in which we are raised. Reflecting on them frequently gives more awareness, if not clarity. Yet, as worldview reflection brings increased clarity, it also constantly raises more questions that seek further answers. That is part of the uniqueness of the human journey: our ongoing attempt to understand who we are and why we do the things we do.

Worldviews of Today

Worldviews can be of a wide assortment and are frequently, though not exclusively, grounded in particular religious or spiritual traditions and are always situated in historical and socio-economic contexts. Worldviews are dynamic. They are always in process and always changing because humans,

who possess worldviews, are also always changing. In some ways, world-views are ideal types. Yet it is rarely the case that worldviews do not share some common ground with others. Nonetheless, they do differ from one another at crucial points, and hence the need to distinguish important features.

All people have a worldview of some kind. Such a worldview might be well articulated, or it might be rather vague, depending on the individual or individuals concerned. A worldview can be specific to an individual or to groups of individuals and may also align with some traditional or well-known worldviews, in whole or in part. We know that there are world-views, for we not only hear and read about them, we also see them in action. But which ones should be distinguished; which ones might be highlighted?

Ninian Smart divides the world into "six main blocs of beliefs": the modern West; Marxist countries; the Islamic crescent; Old Asia; the Latin South; and the multitudinous smaller societies mainly of the South. Each of these geographic blocs has a dominant or major worldview, but they invariably also include minor worldviews, or "outriders" as he terms them. Smart's worldview types are helpful. He recognizes the influence of other than the traditional religious worldviews and includes Marxism and Secular Humanism (Smart, 1983). He also recognizes that geographic regions can be dominated by one particular worldview, and then recognizes that it can also be shaped by the culture in which it resides. More than thirty-five years after Smart's "blocs of beliefs", the world has changed considerably, however. Immigration patterns reveal that certain worldviews formerly confined to certain geographic regions have now spread to many more parts of the world. Islam is an example of this, as is Consumerism and Capitalism, all of which are lived worldviews.

James Sire (2004a, 2004b) speaks of eight worldview types: Christian Theism, Deism, Naturalism, Nihilism, Existentialism, Eastern Pantheistic Monism, New Age, and Postmodernism. He analyses them as systems of beliefs, with a focus on ultimate questions, such as: what is real, what is life's meaning and purpose, what is the nature of the human, the existence or non-existence of a higher being and whether or not there is life after this life. His focus on ontological and epistemological issues is also of central importance to him as he further analyses various worldviews. He has also expanded his worldview inventory. Updated versions of his books include a chapter on Islam and sections on Marxism and Secular Humanism. These two latter worldviews command more attention, as do

Consumerism and Capitalism, for all four today have far-reaching global impact. Further, while Sire has also shifted away from a narrow focus on knowledge and recognizes that behaviours play a role, his analysis nonetheless continues to highlight only philosophical ideas implicit in the various worldviews he addresses.

Eugene Webb (2009) advances our understanding of religious worldviews by investigating the diversity within them. This rich diversity, he feels, can overcome conflict within the religious traditions by having each individual develop a "critical, philosophically reflective consciousness" (p. 9). This, he argues, resists simplifying them to something that can be easily dismissed, as Dawkins, Dennett, and others are inclined to do. However, Webb tends to focus almost exclusively on religious worldviews and largely from the perspective of psychology.

Mark Koltko-Rivera (2004) is more comprehensive and encompassing of worldviews both religious and secular as he investigates what "worldview construction addresses and how it functions within individual psychology" (p. 4). He addresses major approaches to the understanding of worldviews during the twentieth century; yet he too approaches them largely from the perspective of psychology. His concern is whether "worldview" is justifiable as a psychological construct.

Stephen Pepper (1942), writing much earlier, spoke of six "root metaphors" or "world hypotheses" (animism, mysticism, formism, mechanism, organicism, and contextualism) as "hypotheses about the origin and development of schools of philosophy" (p. 199). He also investigated the sources of these world hypotheses and concluded that each was grounded in a particular "root metaphor" or comprehensive understanding of the world. Pepper responded to the debates of his time and as such constructed worldviews that are less spoken of today or live on in different forms. Some feel Pepper's categories and explanations are still valuable today in the area of psychology, sensing that the concept of "world hypotheses" reveals "philosophical sources of current conflicts within behaviour and other psychologies" (Hayes et al., 1988, p. 97).

The international journal *Worldviews: Global Religions, Culture, and Ecology*, established in 1997, focuses on the reciprocal relationship between religion, culture, and ecology worldwide. Its emphasis, however, is largely centred on how religion and culture impact attitudes towards ecology. While broad in its interdisciplinary reach, it largely assumes worldviews without exploring the concept itself.

Clement Vidal (2008, 2012) and others from the Leo Apostel group do attempt a definition of worldview and do speak of religious and secular worldviews. They base their study of worldviews on six important philosophical and existential questions and the disciplines attached to them: what is it (ontology); where does it all come from (explanation); where are we going (prediction); what is good and what is evil (axiology); how should we act (praxeology); and what is true and what is false (epistemology)? They go on to illustrate how four examples of different kinds of worldviews ("scientific"; "religious"; "bacterium"; "society") correspond to the above six philosophical and existential questions. While the various fundamental questions are important, and reminiscent of Sire's concerns, much of their work is an apology for an integrated scientific worldview.

Jacomijn Van der Kooij et al. (2013) take a much more integrated approach and speak of both religious and secular worldviews. They recognize the importance that the concept of worldviews plays in education, and especially how it plays out in a religious studies curriculum. Further, they distinguish between traditional or organized worldviews and personal or individual worldviews. Organized worldviews have developed over time into established systems of sources, traditions, beliefs, values, and rituals and entail the formation of groups of individuals. Every religion, they assert, is an organized worldview. Humanism can also be an organized worldview, centred on certain ideals, sources, values, and even symbols and rituals. Personal worldviews are those of an individual's own views on life, which include beliefs, values, and behaviours. The authors highlight personal worldviews, which they argue have resulted from a decline of traditional religious worldviews. Personal worldviews are often constructed or gleaned from a variety of organized worldviews, religious, and/or secular. But this highlights a problem: from this approach personal worldviews often become beliefs, values, morals, and behaviours that are loosely grounded and shift easily. Nonetheless, their study is helpful in that it recognizes a distinction between organized and personal worldviews and the implications of their distinct character for educational theory and practice. Most important, they recognize the value of worldview education as a way to encourage students to think about their own worldview and those of others.

Richard Barrett (2018) advances perspectives on human worldview evolution based on his "Seven Levels of Consciousness Model", inspired by Maslow's "Hierarchy of Needs". Barrett divides history into seven evolving worldviews: Clan Awareness (prior to 10,000 BCE); Tribe