

Martin Gertler

# A Worldview with a Future

Discover Your Inner Compass



Consumerism

Transhumanism

Religionism

Hedonism

Veganism

Humanism

Stoicism

Technicism

Economism

Postmaterialism

Nationalism

Economic liberalism

## **Imprint**

### **A Worldview with a Future**

Find Your Inner Compass

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# Foreword

## Welcome!

We live in confusing times. The world seems to be getting louder, faster, and more contradictory. Climate crisis, political divisions, personal doubts – it often feels like the "family lunch" scene with which this book begins: *everyone is talking at once, but no one has a clear compass.*

I was looking for precisely this compass.

This search began for me not as an author, but as a scientist. I wanted to know why we as a society are so stuck. Why don't we act, even though we know everything about the climate crisis?

For my dissertation this summer, I examined the major thought patterns of our time – our worldviews. I wanted to know: which of these worldviews are "brakes" that prevent us from acting in the face of the climate crisis, and which are "activators"? The results were clear: it's not about *knowledge*, but about how we *see the world* – and not every worldview has the important climate issues in mind (Gertler, 2025b).

I realized that these findings should not be left to gather dust in university libraries. This book is therefore an attempt to translate my academic results into a personal "training" program – for you, for everyone.

This book is not a manifesto telling you what to think. It is your toolbox. At the beginning, you will find a short exercise to start your own inner compass. We will then explore twelve different ways of thinking, and you can check how each one might suit you. After that, I will lay my cards on the table and show you which worldview I have identified as the most logical and sustainable from my point of view – and why. Formally speaking, it is one of the youngest, but it has very old roots.

There are links to further information on the website I have set up for this book: <https://weltanschauung.net/>. Direct links to additional information and materials are provided at the relevant points in the book.

I look forward to accompanying you on this journey. Let's get started!

*Martin Gertler*

## Who am I - and where do I actually stand?

Let's look at a short **story** to answer this question. We will come back to it from time to time throughout the book.

It can help us to understand the different expectations of the people involved, their personalities and characteristics, as well as their worldviews!



It is Sunday afternoon, 2 p.m. The table in the garden is laden with food. The air smells of barbecue, rosemary, and Aunt Helene's perfume. It is loud. People are laughing. They are arguing.

Julia holds her wine glass and smiles. She likes these people. But, as so often, she feels like a visitor at a party where everyone else knows the rules. She feels like an observer.

Her uncle Thomas is giving a monologue about his new car. He loves being the center of attention, he literally sucks up the energy of the group.

Julia's gaze wanders to her cousin, who is sitting quietly on the sidelines reading his cell phone. *One is introverted, the other extroverted*, she thinks. But she herself is neither one nor the other. She is right in the middle, but not really *there*. She doesn't feel the urge to belong.

The conversation jumps to the climate crisis. "*We finally need technology!*" Thomas exclaims. "*Carbon capture! E-fuels! Engineers will solve the problem.*"

Julia's niece Moni, 19, shakes her head vehemently: "*That's self-deception! We have to change. We have to make sacrifices. It's a question of attitude!*"

Aunt Helene waves her off. "*Oh, child. Just eat something decent first.*" And she slides a plate over to Julia: "*Have a steak. You're just skin and bones.*"

Julia looks at the meat. She has been avoiding it for a long time, but she hasn't told anyone. Now it feels wrong. At the same time, she looks at the

family's golden retriever, who is lying at her feet and is always being petted by the children. *"Why do we pet one and eat the other?"* she asks quietly, almost to herself.

Her uncle Thomas laughs boisterously. *"Because humans are the crown of creation, child! Every animal is there for us."*

Monis brother Jan, who has just finished his meal, is already getting up: *"Right, I have to go to the gym! We have training in a minute. Take care!"*

Meanwhile, at the other end of the table, the conversation turns to finances. *"You just have to be efficient,"* says a friend of the family. *"Time is money. Every decision has to pay off."*

Moni disagrees: *"It's not about what pays off, but what makes sense! I'd rather have less money and more time for things that are important to me."*

Julia puts down her glass. She feels that familiar "alien feeling." All these conversations - about technology, food, money, "us" - now seem to her like fragments of a single, big question:

***How do I - how do we actually want to live?***

\*

This short story can convey to us how the characters in it think and feel. Take a minute or two and summarize for yourself what went through your mind as you read the story. Which positions did you **spontaneously** agree with? And which ones **did you tend to reject**?

This is how *I* would assess the participants in the conversation:

**Uncle Thomas** (the "host") loves groups. He follows herd behavior and tradition; he sees humans as *the "crown of creation."* He doesn't recognize his logical error and laughs about it – and he relies on tech-savvy people: *"The engineers will solve it."*

**Julia** (the "observer") likes people but doesn't need groups. Her "alien feeling" is her reality. She is an "observer": she sees the logical error and it

bothers her.

**Moni** (the "activist") does not think materially: "*What makes sense!*", but focuses on her own attitude: "*We have to change.*"

**The family friend** (the "efficient one") thinks materially: "*Time is money. Every decision has to pay off.*"

**Jan** (the "athlete") is a community person: "*We have training soon*"; his actions are strongly influenced by the collective.

...and how do **you** assess them?

### ***Key terms for orientation***

This book is about *worldviews*. Some key terms can help us to identify traces that may be important in worldviews.

I have therefore prepared four key terms that we can use later when reviewing each of the twelve worldviews presented:

### ***Belonging – Morality – Values – Solution***

Let's use these four terms to briefly reflect on your own reactions while reading the story!

#### **Belonging**

Do you feel comfortable with Thomas' loud sense of "we"?

Or do you share Julia's distant "alien feeling"?

#### **Morals**

Did the statement "crown of creation" sound right to you?

Or did Julia's quiet question about the logical error (dog/steak) strike a chord with you because you've thought about this contradiction yourself?

## Values

Does the attitude "time is money" appeal to you because it is efficient?

Or do you agree more with Moni, who asks about "meaning"?

## Solution

Where does your hope lie? Do you trust in the focus on technology (new inventions will solve the climate crisis)?

Or do you believe in the attitude focus (we need to change our consciousness)?

Now you probably have a better idea of what these terms mean.

### *How do these key terms help us?*

Belonging, morality, values, and solution can be keywords for us that we associate with worldviews. Details:

**Belonging** is an anchor for relationships. People never subscribe to a worldview solely on the basis of rational arguments. It is always also about belonging, trust, and recognition. Commitment arises, for example, through community (religions, humanism, even veganism as a community), rituals and practices (holidays, nutrition, cultures of discussion), and also through self-image ("This is who I am.")

Without offers of belonging, a worldview would remain rather unattractive to many people. With sense of belonging, it can become an offer of identity. Especially in times of political uncertainty and climate risks, belonging is often the first point of contact, because people are looking for stability.

**Morality** is the normative backbone. Morality is formulated as "should." It explains how we should treat each other, what is permitted or frowned upon. In a worldview, morality has the following functions above all: it makes behavior predictable, which can stabilize groups, it provides rules for conflicts, and it creates legitimacy.

Worldviews differ primarily in where they derive morality from. In religions, it refers to divine authority; in humanism, to human dignity. Economism preaches the principles of efficiency and welfare. Veganism is about avoiding suffering and empathy. And stoicism focuses on the natural order and rationality.

Why do we need morality? It gives meaning to our actions - without it, a worldview would lack normative traction.

**Values** provide a system of orientation. If I imagine morality as a compass in my life, then values represent the cardinal directions. Values bundle collective expectations: for example, freedom, compassion, and responsibility. We carry them within ourselves. Therefore, they are more permanent than concrete norms and contain both emotional and rational components.

Every worldview provides a set of values that helps individuals interpret complex situations directly. Values therefore help us with everyday decisions: What is important right now? What is secondary? What is really worthwhile?

**The solution** is the practical benefit of a worldview. If it offers me no prospects for a solution, it is unlikely to help me. The question of the solution concerns both dealing with global problems and personal crises and questions about the future.

Solutions can take many different forms: religions offer comfort, meaning, and hope for salvation. Humanism stands for rational cooperation and human rights. Veganism promises health, the reduction of animal suffering, and effective climate relief. Economism relies on technical innovation and its belief in growth. Stoicism promotes inner freedom and greater

resilience. And sustainability thinking sees the solution in respecting planetary boundaries and pushing for social transformation.

### ***Why we should consider these four concepts together***

If I imagine worldviews as systems for coping with the future, then these four concepts are something like functional axes:

**Belonging** provides emotional support and community, **morality** offers normative orientation and a structure of legitimacy, **values** promise long-term priorities and identity formation, and the **solution** is realized through practical models of action and promises for the future.

Together, these four concepts form the **operating system** of every worldview. People adhere to a worldview when they feel, *"This will help me navigate my life better."*

You don't need to write down the four terms, because you will encounter them repeatedly in this book. I use them as "**characteristics**" in the **overview** of each worldview:

Characteristic	Indicator	Rating (0 to 5)	Reason
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Each **characteristic** in the left column specifies **two indicators** that can be rated from "not at all" (0) to "very strong" (5). This is then shown in the "Rating" column as follows: **0/5** (= not at all) to **5/5** (= very strong).

I have made the ratings in the overview tables in the following twelve chapters myself, based on my own assessment. For each rating, I have of course always entered a brief **explanation** in the right-hand column.

Are you ready? Then let's continue!

# Part I: Twelve worldviews – which one is right for the 21st century?

Before us lie **the twelve most important worldviews** (abbreviated as WW) that shape our thinking, our politics, and our everyday lives – from humanism to consumerism, from nationalism to veganism. To help you stay on track, I have not simply sorted these twelve worldviews alphabetically, but grouped them into **four thematic blocks**. These serve as your main guideposts:

## ***Block A: The meaning seekers (focus: internal)***

They like ideas and attitudes that can be found in **humanism, religionism, and stoicism**. These are attitudes that seek meaning *within* – in human reason, in faith, or in spiritual peace.

## ***Block B: The System Optimizers (focus: external)***

They like to roll up their sleeves: in economic liberalism, economism, and technicism. These are the "doers" at work. They rely on efficiency, markets, and technology to organize the *outside* world and solve problems - and sometimes to deliberately thwart solutions that actually make sense.

## ***Block C: The identity creators (focus: the group)***

They like meaningful answers and elaborate fanfare: in **nationalism, consumerism, and hedonism**. These WORLDVIEW provide answers to the question "Who am I?" - whether through *belonging* to a nation, through possessions, or through enjoyment.

## ***Block D: The world expanders (focus: transformation)***

They like unfamiliar, new impulses: in **post-materialism, transhumanism, and veganism**. Here you will encounter radical and new ideas that seek to

*expand* our previous *boundaries* - be it in terms of possessions, the body, or morality.

One thing you should definitely keep in mind: you don't have to read this book from cover to cover!

If one of the worldview doesn't interest you, just move on to the next one.

Let's start with the first block: the meaning seekers.