Seeking His Spirit: defining "worldview"

By Hannah Rosenthal
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BUZZ! BUZZ! I switched off my alarm and clumsily headed towards the bathroom, stretching for my contact case before I stumbled out of my dorm room. The hall was blurred and I nearly slipped on a dirty sock someone had unintentionally stored in the hallway. My fingers groped for the handle and I soon faced myself in the mirror in all of my morning glory. I quickly rinsed my hands and opened wide my right eye. Plop! In went the right contact. Plop! In went the left. I blinked twice as the lenses settled around my pupils. My reflection came into focus. Now I could face the morning.

Contact lenses are hardly visible within my eyes, and yet they determine the clarity with which I see reality. The correctness of my lenses either helps or hurts my understanding of the world around me. The same is true of a worldview. It acts as the lens through which one views the world. Everyone has a worldview. Sometimes we are aware of it and think critically about how it affects our lives. Sometimes other people give it to us and we never investigate it fully.

As human beings, we instinctively ask five basic questions concerning our origin, identity, meaning, morality, and destiny. Our worldview determines how we answer these questions. Each idea has consequences, because ideas are considered by people and people have the ability to perform physical actions.

In a pyramidal model similar to the food pyramid we learned in United States grade schools, our worldview is the foundation (the layer designated for grains), our values stem from that foundation (fruits, vegetables, meats, and dairy) and our actions rest at the top (desserts). Actions do not shape worldviews, they merely reveal them. For example, my ideas about identity stem from the worldview taught by Jesus Christ. Therefore, I value human beings regardless of their size, development, environment, or degree of dependency. This value leads me to action: joining a pro-life group on campus.

There is no such thing as a neutral idea. All information is made up of ideas and all ideas are made up of words. Therefore, the battle over ideas is a battle over the definition of words. We. have. defined. every. word. in. our. minds. Are they the correct definitions? What do you call it when a husband has sexual intercourse with a woman he is not married to? An affair? Adultery? What is inside of a mother's womb? A baby? A fetus? What is homosexual behavior? A sin? An alternative lifestyle?

If you do not define your own worldview, someone else will do it for you. When you turn off your mind, others will think for you. As C.S. Lewis once wrote, "the most dangerous ideas in a society are not the ones being argued, but the ones that are assumed." If you are a Christian brother or sister, I challenge you to think critically of all the information you learn. Are the ideas your professors teaching you in line with the worldview taught by Christ?

If you are not a Christian, I challenge you to investigate your worldview. What do you believe about your origin, identity, meaning, morality, and destiny? Why did you come to believe those ideas? Are they true? How can you be sure? If you are seeking truth, remember that Christianity stems from objective events in history. "You can test Christianity the way you cannot test other religions," said Sean McDowell, a published Christian apologist.

If you are not thinking critically of all the ideas you interact with, your mind will be taken captive by the assumptions of your surrounding environment. Your worldview will yield your values and those values will determine your actions. Ideas have consequences. Good ideas have good consequences and bad ideas have bad consequences. Be aware of your ideas. Be aware of your lens.

"I'm afraid we're going to have to let you go"
Cartoon by Rob Bou-Saab (*http://rbousaab.blogspot.com/*)

Rebuttal to "Rationality vs. faith"

By Timothy Smith
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Last fall, an opinion article attempting to demonstrate a conflict between rationality and faith appeared in TechNews. This article needs a rebuttal. The real conflict is not between rationality and faith, rather, it is between opposing worldviews and their efforts to explain the nature of reality, ethics, and knowledge (and by extension our ability to do science).

The author stated that he is "detached from any kind of religious belief." In fact, we all hold to a set of beliefs by which we interpret the world and which form a basis for our decisions. These beliefs are inherently religious, since we assume them to be true by faith. One might think of faith as the set of a priori, unprovable assumptions which ground a person's worldview. They range from beliefs about the nature of reality to how we can know right from wrong. Even agnostics have these religiously held beliefs; they may believe that there is not enough information to know whether a god exists. Taken together, these faith-based beliefs comprise an individual's worldview.

It is a fact that individuals with many differing and antagonistic worldviews do science. The question we must ask then is "Which worldview comports with the ability to do science?" Only within a worldview based on the Judeo-Christian God can the ability to do observable, testable, and repeatable science make sense. According to this worldview, God created the world in an orderly fashion, with natural laws, such as gravity and conservation of energy. These laws enable us to predict discrete future events from observed events in the past. This worldview alone provides a rational basis for the existence of the inductive principle, which is foundational to the scientific method.

Agnosticism, on the other hand, cannot provide meaningful reasons why the universe behaves in a regular way. If we are truly here as a result of random evolutionary processes, why is the law of gravity universally true? Why don't magnets attract or repel each other arbitrarily? Why can we accumulate scientific knowledge and use it to predict future events? Agnosticism cannot account for the scientific realities of our universe. This is not to say that agnostics cannot do science. In fact, there may be many brilliant scientists who identify themselves as agnostics. However, in order for the agnostic to do science, he or she must first assume the Judeo-Christian worldview to be true since his or her own worldview does not account for the regularity and order of the universe.

In summary, we all have our own belief structure by which we view the world. Only the Judeo-Christian worldview provides us with the framework by which we can make sense out of our ability to predict discrete future events based on scientific knowledge.