

## Chapter 6. Competing Worldviews

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“We must believe something before we can know anything.” Augustine (354-430 A.D.)

### Session overview

- Identify three categories of worldviews, skepticism, methodism, and particularism
- Document every worldview ultimately contains particularist elements
- Common errors in false worldviews
- Briefly review several worldviews and identify unique characteristics of beliefs

### Key passages

- Understanding the times: **1 Chronicles 12:32, 2 Corinthians 10:5**
- Biblical particularism: **2 Timothy 3:16-17, Genesis 1:1, Psalm 1, Luke 9:23-24, John 15:9-11, Luke 6:46-49, 1 Corinthians 3:10-11, 2 Timothy 2:15**

### Philosophical worldview

- Worldview is a pattern of ideas, beliefs, convictions, and habits that help us make sense of God, the world, and our relationship to God and the world.”<sup>1</sup>
- Habits are essential for life
  - Purchase of goods and services
  - Although often an initial struggle, many people can change their habits
- Flourishing financially depends on one’s patterns or habits
- How we spend money is a powerful resource for understanding our core ideas, beliefs, convictions, and habit
- The better a financial analyst understands the habits of particular customers, suppliers, and competitors, the more likely the analyst will make the best decisions (**1 Chronicles 12:32**)
- The ability to understand different worldviews requires one to identify core patterns
- We can in fact discern between entire categories of worldviews and take every thought captive (**2 Corinthians 10:5**)
- Worldview tests
  1. Reasonableness of the worldview: Is it internally coherent?
  2. Explore how the worldview comports with our actual personal experience
  3. Consider how the worldview aligns with scientific experience. Does it explain empirical observations well?
  4. Gauge how the worldview results in personal practice

### Skepticism, Methodism, and Particularism

#### *Problem of the Criterion*

- Step 1 illustrates two mutually exclusive declarative propositions—truth bearers
- Step 2 illustrates the need for some sort of criterion to evaluate these two truth-bearers
- Step 3 illustrates the need for some sort of criterion to evaluate alternate criteria

#### *Solution categories for the problem of the criterion*

- Skepticism – placing one’s faith in the fact that one can never know the appropriate criterion
- Methodism – placing one’s faith in a particular method to make the choice
- Particularism – placing one’s faith in selected particular declarative propositions that you believe you have warrant to be held true

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<sup>1</sup>See Jeff Myers and David Noble, *Understanding the Times*, Summit Ministries, p. 11.

### *Skepticism*

- Widely held among academics; however, most academics are not global skeptics, rather they are local skeptics—say skeptics of any religious claims.
- Some philosophers who are skeptics make the following argument:

*Premise 1:* I believe I know some claims are true.

*Premise 2:* I do not know every true claim.

*Observation:* Some claim presently unknown, may prove that what I believed as true in Premise 1 is, in fact, false.

*Conclusion:* Therefore, I cannot know any claim is true.

- All knowledge claims start with some core beliefs
- Given we do not know if the core beliefs are true, then we do not know if any claims are true.

### *Methodism*

- Methodism is much more popular and often ardently held
- People adopt a culturally plausible worldview without careful examination
  - Become deeply faithful to their adopted worldview
  - Scientism: One should only believe truth claims that are supported by scientific evidence

### *Particularism*

- Particularism asserts that selected particular declarative propositions have warrant to be held true
  - For example, across most cultures, it is held that harming a defenseless child is wrong
  - Particularist would say that the widely held human virtues (for example, prudence, justice, temperance, and courage) are rationally held even if adequate scientific evidence is not available or is not supportive.
- Both skepticism and methodism rely on particularism to justify their existence
  - Skeptic asserts that you cannot discern between mutually exclusive ideas
  - Asserts the truthfulness of skepticism and hence skepticism has a defeater
- Particularism provides the rational basis for the Christian worldview
- What are the foundational claims of particularism?
- Humans are equipped with belief forming mechanisms to account for ways we think in the presence of certain experiences
  - Holding a cup of coffee is fundamentally different from the idea of holding a cup of coffee
  - The idea (abstract) is different from actual cup (concrete)
  - How do we know that the idea (abstract, truth bearer) in our minds correspond to actual reality (concrete, truth maker)?
  - We naturally assume reality corresponds to our ideas of reality.
  - The Christian particularist would therefore claim we are created in such a way that we cannot help but think in this manner (a particular knowledge claim).

*Biblical particularism (selected passages)*  
**2 Timothy 3:16-17, Genesis 1:1, Psalm 1**

- People can and do change their worldview – people are not born with a worldview
- We are all born into families and cultures with predominant worldviews
- Our families and local cultures do influence our perspectives
- College students often do drastically change their worldview
  - Most dramatically seen with students from statist countries, such as Marxist-based, that impose particular worldviews by force
  - When considering changing our worldview, say from naturalism to Christianity, one must consider the potential for error.

**Error analysis related to worldviews**

*Tight (intolerant, dogmatism)*

- Intolerant to new ideas
- Some investment professionals have adopted an investment philosophy based on what was established many years ago despite the significant, mounting evidence concerning its truthfulness
  - Mounting evidence that investment professionals lack the ability to forecast financial instrument prices
  - Unfortunately, being either delusional or deceptive, they continue to claim they have this skill
- Professors teach what they were taught many years ago regardless of new evidence

*Loose (overly tolerant, relativism)*

- Overly tolerant of new ideas
- Some investment professionals adopt investment philosophies is based on whatever is presently in fashion, independent of any contrary evidence
  - Trend following is very popular (momentum trading)
  - Investment professional promotes whatever trading strategy seemed to be successful during the recent past
- Professors teach any expressed idea as if it has equal merit regardless of evidence
- Foundational ideas coalesce to form our worldview. We now briefly explore two categories of error when actually applying different worldviews.

*Type I error (false positive):*

- The truth claim is correct, but a particular worldview rejects it.

*Type II error (false negative):*

- The truth claim is incorrect, but a particular worldview fails to reject it.
- Tightly held worldviews have a high type I error potential
- Loose worldviews have a high type II error potential
- Both errors are of deep concern
  - More truth claims are discarded
  - More false claims are adopted
  - Very detrimental to human flourishing

## Brief review of selected worldviews

### *Scientism*

- No declarative proposition will be asserted true absent scientific evidence
- Scientism's own definition fails to allow for the scientism belief
- Scientism is a statement of philosophy; hence there is no scientific evidence for it
- The only way to rationally hold to scientism is through particularism
  - Fails to give satisfactory answers to the four questions related to origins, meaning, morality, and destiny
  - Scientism leaves one with no explanation for how nothing became something
  - Scientism leads one to conclude that life is meaningless, there are no moral laws, and there is no ultimate destiny

### *Positivism*

- Positivism (also known as logical positivism) is “a philosophical system that holds that every rationally justifiable assertion can be scientifically verified or is capable of logical or mathematical proof, and that therefore rejects metaphysics and theism.”
- Positivism's assertion is self-refuting
- Positivism worldview cannot scientifically verify or logically prove itself

### *Post-modernism*

- Post-modernism (PM) allows for only ‘local’ truths.
- Justification standard is set low so that all true claims are validated
- The PM philosophical worldview appears among many professionals to be the prevailing investment worldview today. For example, modern data mining exercises, such as “artificial” intelligence, lead to numerous truth claims related to investment strategies.

### *Nature of Beliefs<sup>2</sup>*

- Beliefs provide the framework for living and influenced by culture. Three observations:
  1. Beliefs have at least three characteristics—content, strength, and centrality.
    - a) Belief's content: Is it true? We are responsible for the content of our beliefs.
    - b) Belief's strength: Degrees include plausibility, such as likely, fairly likely, quite likely, beyond reasonable doubt, and completely certain. Evidence strengthens our belief.
    - c) Belief's centrality: How important is this particular belief's role in our worldview.
  2. Beliefs can be changed. Not by direct effort, rather change occurs indirectly
  3. Plausibility structure of a culture: Whether a proposition is plausible is a function of the beliefs one already has and the prior conditions of the human mind.

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<sup>2</sup>J.P. Moreland and William Lane Craig, *Philosophical Foundations for a Christian Worldview*, IVP Academic, Downers Grove, IL, 2003.

## Worldview and personal finance

- Beliefs are entrenched into personality in a variety of ways
  - Repetition
  - Practice
  - Training
- To manage their money well, focus heavily on discovering the correct worldview
  - Anchoring on the true worldview will naturally result in a lifestyle that can maintain right beliefs.
  - Right beliefs naturally flow to improved decision-making and hence better financial health.
- “For the wise men of old the cardinal problem had been how to conform the soul to reality, and the solution had been knowledge, self-discipline, and virtue. For magic and applied science alike the problem is how to subdue reality to the wishes of man: the solution is a technique; and both, in the practice of this technique, are ready to do things hitherto regarded as disgusting and impious—such as digging up and mutilating the dead.”<sup>3</sup>
  - “Science and religion both aim at conforming the mind to objective truth, objective reality (science conforms our mind to the nature of the universe, and religion conforms our mind to the mind of God and our will to the will of God). Magic and technology, on the other hand, try to conform objective reality to the human will. That is why they both arose at the same time—not the Middle Ages but the Renaissance, not the Age of God but the Age of Man. Both are Faustian, Promethean. The difference is, of course, that technology works while magic doesn’t (usually). But their end, their goal, the purpose behind them, the human values and desires and state of soul that set them in motion, are the same.”<sup>4</sup>
- Everyone is in the process of conforming our minds to some chosen worldview
- If the chosen worldview is fundamentally wrong, then our entire philosophical framework is misaligned and subsequent decisions will be deeply impacted, particularly financial decisions
- The Piazza del Duomo is unique and a spectacle to see, the building just cannot function as the original designers intended as the foundation is flawed (Figure 6.1)
- One key area where worldview deeply impacts personal finance is how we view debt
- Tend to linearly extrapolate past financial patterns into future expectations
  - For example, the decision to buy a bigger house based on the assumption that our wage will continue to increase and we can grow our income so as to be able to make the mortgage payments
  - Empirically, future financial outcomes rarely follow historical averages
  - Like the Piazza del Duomo, a faulty worldview may be pretty to look at but results in disfunction and often significant human suffering.

## Summary

- Provided several definitions for philosophical worldview
- Three categories of worldviews, skepticism, methodism, and particularism
- Every worldview ultimately contains particularist elements
- When selecting a worldview we were cautioned against two types of errors—type I and II
- Several worldviews were reviewed
- Identifying unique characteristics of beliefs

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<sup>3</sup>C. S. Lewis, *The Abolition of Man*, p. 77.

<sup>4</sup>Peter Kreeft, C. S. Lewis for the Third Millennium: Six Essays on the Abolition of Man (Ignatius, 2011). Quoted by Justin Taylor at <https://www.thegospelcoalition.org/blogs/justin-taylor/these-three-sentences-by-c-s-lewis-are-worth-at-least-an-hour-of-meditation/>.

## Key Bible Passages

**1 Chronicles 12:32** Of Issachar, men who had understanding of the times, to know what Israel ought to do, 200 chiefs, and all their kinsmen under their command.

**2 Corinthians 10:5** We destroy arguments and every lofty opinion raised against the knowledge of God, and take every thought captive to obey Christ,

**2 Timothy 3:16-17** <sup>16</sup>All Scripture is breathed out by God and profitable for teaching, for reproof, for correction, and for training in righteousness, <sup>17</sup>that the man of God may be complete, equipped for every good work.

**Genesis 1:1** In the beginning, God created the heavens and the earth.

**Psalms 1** <sup>1</sup>Blessed is the man who walks not in the counsel of the wicked, nor stands in the way of sinners, nor sits in the seat of scoffers; <sup>2</sup>but his delight is in the law of the LORD, and on his law he meditates day and night. <sup>3</sup>He is like a tree planted by streams of water that yields its fruit in its season, and its leaf does not wither. In all that he does, he prospers. <sup>4</sup>The wicked are not so, but are like chaff that the wind drives away. <sup>5</sup>Therefore the wicked will not stand in the judgment, nor sinners in the congregation of the righteous; <sup>6</sup>for the LORD knows the way of the righteous, but the way of the wicked will perish. See also **Deuteronomy 11:13-15**, **Joshua 1:8-9**.

**Luke 9:23-24** <sup>23</sup>And he said to all, "If anyone would come after me, let him deny himself and take up his cross daily and follow me. <sup>24</sup>For whoever would save his life will lose it, but whoever loses his life for my sake will save it.

**John 15:9-11** <sup>9</sup>As the Father has loved me, so have I loved you. Abide in my love. <sup>10</sup>If you keep my commandments, you will abide in my love, just as I have kept my Father's commandments and abide in his love. <sup>11</sup>These things I have spoken to you, that my joy may be in you, and that your joy may be full. See also **John 8:31-36**.

**Luke 6:46-49** <sup>46</sup>"Why do you call me 'Lord, Lord,' and not do what I tell you? <sup>47</sup>Everyone who comes to me and hears my words and does them, I will show you what he is like: <sup>48</sup>he is like a man building a house, who dug deep and laid the foundation on the rock. And when a flood arose, the stream broke against that house and could not shake it, because it had been well built. <sup>49</sup>But the one who hears and does not do them is like a man who built a house on the ground without a foundation. When the stream broke against it, immediately it fell, and the ruin of that house was great."

**1 Corinthians 3:10-11** <sup>10</sup>According to the grace of God given to me, like a skilled master builder I laid a foundation, and someone else is building upon it. Let each one take care how he builds upon it. <sup>11</sup>For no one can lay a foundation other than that which is laid, which is Jesus Christ.

**2 Timothy 2:15** Do your best to present yourself to God as one approved, a worker who has no need to be ashamed, rightly handling the word of truth.

**2 Corinthians 10:5** We destroy arguments and every lofty opinion raised against the knowledge of God, and take every thought captive to obey Christ,

**1 Chronicles 12:32** Of Issachar, men who had understanding of the times, to know what Israel ought to do, 200 chiefs, and all their kinsmen under their command.