

Questions a Worldview Seeks to Answer (Part II)

Our Daily Bread Christian University
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Christian University &
Our Daily Bread Ministries.



Why am I here?

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The title of Viktor Frankl's book *Man's Search For Meaning* hits on an important aspect of life for all of us. "Why am I here and what difference does it make?" A worldview has a way of probing this question within the human heart.

Monotheism and Meaning

The monotheistic faiths of Judaism, Christianity, and Islam would all agree that we derive meaning from our Creator. Having been made for a relationship with God, we can only find lasting purpose in honoring Him and finding joy in His presence.

Deism and Meaning

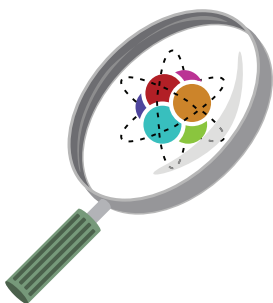
Deists do not believe we derive our meaning from a personal Creator. Instead, they believe we make use of our intelligence, conscience, community, and creativity to find meaning in nature.

Naturalism and Meaning

Many naturalists find meaning in "progress." They believe that the human race developed into a modern society from its primitive beginnings. This leads them to believe that we are capable of improving our behavior and living conditions. We therefore should skillfully use science and technology to benefit mankind.

Nihilism and Meaning

The nihilist feels that traditional theories of meaning may satisfy the masses but are all built on foundations of sand.





What is the basis for my values?

Because the nihilist sees the flaws in existing institutions, he often views himself as an activist who must challenge the superficial meanings provided by tradition.

Existentialism and Meaning

Existentialists believe that the cruel joke of our world is that each of us comes into the world without any overarching purpose. No objective meaning exists in the external cosmos. The existentialist must subjectively invent his own “reason for being” through the exercise of free will.

Pantheism and Meaning

As the pantheist cooperates with good moral choices of “karma,” he will later be reincarnated into a higher station. His ultimate meaning will be realized when he becomes one with the universe.

New Consciousness and Meaning

Those who embrace New Consciousness discover meaning through those experiences provided in an altered state of consciousness. The spread of “cosmic consciousness” to others will initiate more individuals into being lords of their own universe.

People find significance for their lives in a variety of ways. But meaning is often connected in some way with moral guidelines of “being a good person.” But where do the values to be good come from?

What is the basis for my values?

It can be enlightening to listen to the moral judgments we make. Regardless of our worldview, and despite how inconsistent we might sound, we all are inclined to say things like, “This isn’t right.” “That wasn’t fair.” “I want to do the right thing.” It seems the sense of “oughtness” is an indelible part of our human nature. But where does each worldview get its guidelines for moral decisions?

Monotheism and Ethics



Judaism, Christianity, and Islam all agree that God has placed a conscience in human personality. They are divided, however, on what specific special revelation informs that conscience. The Jews derive their moral code from the Torah and the Jewish commentaries on it. The Christians go to the Old and New Testaments for ethical guidance. Muslims build their ethical systems on select parts of the Old and New Testaments, the Koran, and teachings of their respective Islamic sects.

Deism and Ethics

Since God does not tamper with His universe, “special revelation” should not be the basis of moral values. Instead, the deist believes that we should pursue general revelation (nature) because it is there that we will find the self-evident moral values to inform our conscience by reason and free inquiry.

Naturalism and Ethics

According to naturalists, social groups are the sole source of ethical systems. Because of this, we must realize that there are no ethical absolutes from one culture to another. The moral consensus of a group, however, can provide helpful guidelines for ethical decisions. Most often it is easier to live in conformity with the laws and moral guidelines of the culture in which one lives.

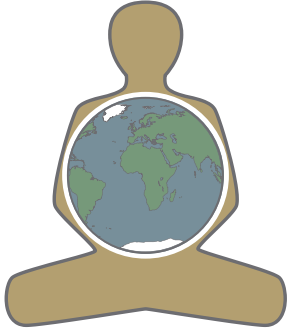
Nihilism and Ethics

Those with this worldview have no binding moral values to judge behavior. Nihilists believe that values promoted by traditional institutions coerce and confine human potential. Because of this, these institutions must be challenged and in some cases even destroyed.



Existentialism and Ethics

Those looking through this window believe that human societies not only provide superficial consolation for meaning but also artificial moral guidance. Existentialists think that most of us fail to see that “morally good behavior” is a simplistic kind of cultural conformity. The existentialist believes that the highest value is for the individual to choose an act that makes his subjective existence meaningful.



What does the future hold?

Pantheism and Ethics

According to pantheism, building up the merit of “good karma” is best guided by dharma. This term refers to the unchanging universal law of order, which decrees that every entity should behave according to its own particular nature. Pantheism is found in many Eastern religious writings.

New Consciousness and Ethics

People with this view believe that because of our animal origin, we are prone toward destructive behavior. Through the expansion of “cosmic consciousness,” however, the mind can be transformed to greater love and peace. Being the lord of one’s own universe can lead to creating one’s own values.

These windows on the world draw their moral codes from personal invention, sacred texts, and social norms. Yet the final question facing each worldview is related directly to the future.

What does the future hold?

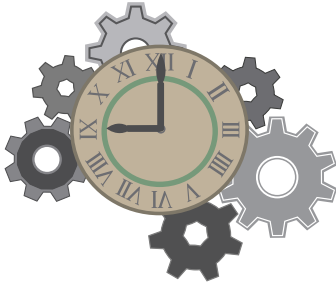
Each of us knows that some day we will die. Along with this is the realization that the universe itself won’t last forever. So how do the different worldviews answer questions related to personal mortality and the future of the world?

Monotheism and the Future

The major monotheistic faiths of Judaism, Christianity, and Islam believe that human consciousness survives physical death either to be welcomed into God’s eternal presence or to be turned away from Him. But the means of attaining eternal life differs in each belief system. Judaism looks to faith and obedience to the Torah. Christianity teaches that faith in the atoning death and resurrection of Christ provides salvation. Muslims believe that submitting to Allah may merit a paradise of sensual delight.

Deism and the Future

The deist does not know if the soul survives death. Although it seems the universe functions like a wind-up clock that will eventually wind down, we should concern ourselves only with



the present and the foreseeable future in improving the human condition.

Naturalism and the Future

The naturalist believes that the consciousness and personality of the individual is forever terminated at physical death. The future of the known universe will be the extinction of all the stars and the end of all life.

Nihilism and the Future

In this view, the positive ideal of human “progress” and the belief in an afterlife have no credibility. The nihilist is also pessimistic about what is to come. We really can’t postulate what the future holds for us or our universe.

Existentialism and the Future

For the existentialist, there is no purpose to existence. One’s ultimate destiny is to die and never be remembered. The future of the universe is doomed to death and extinction.

Pantheism and the Future

Pantheism teaches that the ultimate destiny of “enlightened ones” is to leave the world of material illusion and transcend to become one with the universe. In the meantime, we must experience numerous reincarnations in this universe, which is eternal.

New Consciousness and the Future

This worldview tries to explore the human brain’s unlimited capacities for perception. Those who hold this view believe that through altered states of mind we can transcend ourselves and even possibly contact entities in other dimensions. Personal death or even the death of the universe may be a way to a different reality.

It's apparent that all these windows on the world differ in their views of personal mortality and even where the universe is headed. Indeed, every question asked has a surprising variety of responses. Are we to conclude, then, that each view is equally valid among this diversity of opinion? Or might there be a single view that most consistently contains the truth?