

## Worldviews and Evolution of Human Consciousness

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The *Homo sapiens* species is on a path of potential self-extinction. At a crossroads, we face three self-generated armageddons: Catastrophic climate change. Global political chaos. Collapse of food and health systems. The escape route requires a common sense of global community. The most daunting obstacle to achieving that is not technology, funding, organization, or human resources. It is the pervasive existence of mutually exclusive, existential worldviews.

*New York Times* columnist David Brooks wrote "while global economies are converging, cultures are diverging, and widening cultural differences are leading us into [an unprecedented] period of conflict, inequality and segmentation."<sup>1</sup> I believe this deteriorating external situation results from an "increasing fragmentation of species consciousness." Self-segregating subcultures are becoming ever more isolated. Through the selective use of modern media, they are further circumscribing their own members' minds with self-limiting worldviews.

Given our near-universal communication networks and global markets — in ideas, goods and services — the above described fragmentation is counterintuitive. Nevertheless, virulent theological antagonisms are fueling 21st century terrorism and social warfare — too often leading to violence — in all nations. Wealthy elites and sectarian cults have gone beyond traditional class barriers to separate themselves from others. Building fortress neighborhoods and using defensive social policies, they seek to avoid contamination by those who are different.

These trends indicate the human species is engaged in a profound re-tribalization process — at a time when weapons for defending culture and territory far exceed the destructive power of rocks and clubs. This inability of our fragmented species to reach consensus on economic, political, and social policies threatens our very survival. More than superficial lifestyles are involved.

This situation is an existential phenomenon. Sustainable social and economic policies require big changes in the present self-deprecating and self-abdicating ways most humans see themselves in the universe. A significant percent of humanity sees our existence as the accidental fall-out from an unlikely random collision of illusive particles. But, most humans think we are creatures of a God that has it all figured out in advance and we simply live and die according to His whims.

In either case, practically all humans think we are “just along for the ride” and have little control over our own destiny. This exegesis of worldviews suggests that such Second-Millennium beliefs

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<sup>1</sup> Brooks, David. Column, *New York Times*, August 11, 2005.

must give way to a Third-Millennium updating of our human story to encompass new insights into ancient civilizations and discoveries in behavioral neuroscience and consciousness studies<sup>2</sup>.

The result can be adoption of self-empowering worldviews that will literally change the world.

### Defining Worldview

An Internet/Wikipedia search of the term worldview reveals it is widely used — with a great diversity of definitions. However, the importance of the concept is greatly under-appreciated. Little attention has been paid to its emotionally-charged impacts on individual and group behaviors. Superficial uses of the term worldview have obscured its fundamental role in the creation of wars, waste of natural resources, and retardation of human development.

One definition of worldview is a collection of folktales about human life and nature. Another is that it is a personal or group story, describing one's place in society and nature. A third definition describes it as a collection of presuppositions that guide social behavior and give meaning to various life events. Unfortunately, these definitions minimize the importance of a worldview's role in the rate and direction of evolution in human emotions, mental functions, and behaviors.

The word worldview comes from the German *weltanschauung*, which literally means the way one views his or her world. However, what is lost in translation is the depth and power of this aspect of the mind and its impact on the continual reshaping of the human species and its habitat. While our individual and collective worldviews determine how we perceive our present reality, it also limits — or enhances — our future development. How we create our worldview determines what we can create — peace or war, health or illness, social harmony or civil distress, etc.

When two people discuss any issue, they are likely to do so from two different — even mutually exclusive — sets of assumptions about humans and their place in the bigger picture. For all perceptual, emotional, and behavioral purposes, we live in different realities. Individuals with radically different worldviews simply cannot cross the emotional lines required to draw similar conclusions from the same self-evident facts.

Examples of this are found in contradictory reactions to the human impact on our environment. The same divergent emotional reactions arise in discussions of the use of military force in cultural conflicts, the effects of chemicals in food and health, the education of children for future survival, population policies, and relationships with other species. We need to resolve these profound emotionally-based conflicts threatening the future of our species.

Such destructive emotions result from existential worldviews — repositories of *a priori* ideas accepted as truth — based in neural circuits that direct mental and behavioral responses to external information. These brain-mediated responses include deeply engrained assumptions,

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<sup>2</sup> Von Ward, P. (2011). *We've Never Been Alone* (Charlottesville, VA: Hampton Roads Publishing)

values, ethics, emotions, and survival reflexes. Only when these semi-autonomous responses are altered can changes in a person's overt habits, manners, relationships, and decisions occur.

These emotionally-charged worldviews are not determined by one's IQ level. Keith Stanovich<sup>3</sup> described in the *Scientific American Mind* that high IQ can be easily trumped by emotions. People can be "cognitive misers" taking the easy way out when confronted with difficult choices. This happens because comfortably embedded worldviews overpower logically reasonable or evidence-based interpretations of reality.

While it is obvious that our brain-mediated worldviews emerge from interactions between biology and information, a working bio-info model of the human worldview mechanism still eludes us. We need multidisciplinary team efforts to trace the process in which abstract ideas shape our emotional and physical responses. Humans urgently need to understand how simple, implicit worldviews can have so much influence on our active thoughts and behaviors.

### Stories as Worldviews

One way of thinking about worldviews is to see them as narratives or cultural stories. The religion-based Cradle of Western Civilization story is assumed by European and Western Hemisphere cultures to account for their modernity and technical prowess. However, cultures suppressed by the colonizers cherish their own story and blame the invaders for their destruction.

Sociologist Christian Smith, in *Moral, Believing Animals*, developed twelve contemporary "metanarratives" he considered to have shaped human behaviors<sup>4</sup>. They include the eponymous Capitalist Prosperity, Progressive Socialism, Scientific Enlightenment, Christian [Faith], Militant Islamic Resurgence, and Unity-with-Brahman narratives.

Successful implementation of one of these narratives requires tapping into previously existing worldviews. As an example, in the political and religious arenas, would-be leaders have learned to play on deeply embedded emotions. They use key words that trigger core beliefs to elicit changes in consumption, voting, or other behaviors.

Such efforts eventually fail if the public's fundamental assumptions are not consistent with the advertised narrative. The societal evolution promoted in this paper can only occur when individuals are faced with relevant and persuasive evidence important to them that is clearly incongruent with existing beliefs. Only then do humans shift to achieve an internal consistency.

Modern physical sciences can be seen as a collection of stories. Some deal with new discoveries or outstanding scientists who offer new paradigms in their disciplines. But, these science stories

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<sup>3</sup> Stanovich, K (Nov. 2009). "Rational and Irrational Thought." *Scientific American Mind*.

<sup>4</sup> Smith, C. (2003). *Moral, Believing Animals*. (USA: Oxford University Press).

created from specific fields fail to reach the worldview level of an existential story. That is due to the fact that science is an epistemology, only a method to test specific aspects of worldviews.

A worldview based on a snapshot in the ongoing flow of science can only be a temporary proxy for the real, mostly unknown universe. Such a holding-place cosmology can and should use pieces of knowledge generated by science, but the unknown gaps will always be filled by beliefs.

Generally speaking, when practiced with an open mind, science is a self-correcting process (even when some individuals are attached to their own ideas or results). Conversely, religion in general is not interested in self-assessment and self-correction.

### Conceptual Worldviews

Scholarly taxonomies of worldviews exist, but it is no surprise that they are reflections of their creators' own worldviews. They generally relate to the areas of expertise of the instrument maker, and illustrate philosophical points they wish to communicate.

Willis Harman<sup>5</sup>, as an example, developed a taxonomy of three distinctive worldviews: (1) Materialistic Monism sees everything in the universe as based in the material realm, with matter and energy as aspects of a single substance that produces the human mind. (2) Dualism assumes that mind and matter are separate and provide for both 3-D reality and paranormal phenomena. (3) Mental Monism assumes a universe that comprises consciousness, non-material dimensions, and the physical universe of science.

Dean Radin<sup>6</sup> used these three worldviews to demonstrate how different human reactions to claims of mysterious UFO phenomena may contribute to a progressive shift in consciousness. Radin describes shifts from paranoia to inspiration and from absolute denial to open skepticism and links them to the individuals' changing worldviews.

Belief systems in others subject areas can also be categorized by these three worldviews. The founders of the Creation Museum in Kentucky have an idiosyncratic reading of the Bible. They believe that their God created the Earth in six 24-hour days, and that the entire universe is only a few thousand years old.

Anyone who does not agree with them, in their view, will have to experience the wrath of God when they meet him in heaven. The supernatural aspect of Dualism provides cover for Creation Theories because they cannot be disproved.

Conversely, the Materialistic Monism worldview provides cover for people like Richard Dawkins who do not accept the possibility of a consciousness beyond their notion of mind as an

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<sup>5</sup> Harman, Willis. *The Global Mind Change*. Grand Central Publishing. 1990

<sup>6</sup> Radin, D. Shift at the Frontiers of Consciousness, *IONS Newsletter*. Winter 2008-09 No. 21. pp. 22-27.

epiphenomenon of the material brain. He extrapolates from physical evidence of an evolutionary process, and declares that no *a priori* force could have orchestrated any of the evidence.

In both cases believers interpret the data to suit their purpose. They avoid discussing the fact that their basic assumptions cannot be disproved. Both sides count on their status as authorities to divert any second-order criticism based on a meta-analysis of their logic.

In my view, attempts to construct a science-based cosmology to support a new big picture worldview must make sense of the increasing flow of new insights from quantum physics, genetics, epigenetics, ecology, anomalies in ancient history, neuroscience, consciousness studies, and other fields.

It must also take into account many areas of human experience not yet understood by science. They include near-death and after-life reports, paranormal sensing through physical space and other dimensions, perceived contacts with non-human intelligences, and intuitive knowing.

When I attempted such a synthesis a little over a decade ago the resulting model was one of a self-experimenting, self-learning universe filled with varying dimensional beings — fractals of its activating force. In this model, consciousness and matter are co-dependent for their mutual self-evolution<sup>7</sup>. Over the last decade, the cutting edge of science has corroborated some of it.

Such a theoretical cosmological worldview can be used to make sense of disparate phenomena and widely separated discoveries. But even if its extrapolations reflect accepted facts, it must also include plausible existential assumptions that readers are able to countenance. Otherwise, they will likely dismiss it despite the use of credible experience and evidence-based ideas.

For these reasons, in attempts to develop strategies for serious social change the first step should be identification of the underlying worldviews that are responsible for the problems. To deal with the most pernicious behavioral patterns, to use story or conceptual level worldviews would not make much of a difference. Only changes at the depth of teleological worldviews are deep enough to redirect the present schizophrenic evolutionary track of human consciousness.

### Teleological Worldviews

Whether people are humanists or creationists, physical evolutionists or spiritual mystics, they have developed their own answers — or accepted answers produced by others — to three existential questions: *Where did we come from? What are we doing here? What happens when we die?* Regardless of experience and learning, all of us carry a set of beliefs that represents how we have come to terms with the absence of absolute answers to these three questions.

Teleological worldviews assume a purposefulness with which we can go to sleep at night despite having a less-than-100% level of certainty of its cause. We cope with this existential level of

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<sup>7</sup> Von Ward, P. (2001) *Our Solarian Legacy* (Charlottesville, VA: Hampton Roads Publishing).

physical and mental anxiety by articulating the best guesses we can offer ourselves. This makes it very difficult for anyone else to snatch away our “comfort blanket” of teleological worldviews.

### A Teleological Quadrant

For the last decade I have used a questionnaire designed to identify the range of teleological worldviews found in student groups, conference participants, seminar attendees, website visitors, church groups, etc. It appears to be a reliable method to categorize individual worldviews at the level of basic beliefs and working assumptions.

Its simple questions are designed to transcend cultural barriers (and, hopefully, language differences). By placing people into different categories based on their fundamental beliefs, it works across religious, educational, and class divisions.

The instrument ranks the strength of the subject’s beliefs in four different modes of thinking: Materialist, Supernatural, Mystical, and Integral<sup>8</sup>. When two individuals have high scores in different modes of consciousness, it is likely that they experience life as if they were living in different worlds or states of reality.

The questionnaire has 32 questions with four possible answers to each. Based on a forced choice principle, the response closest to the person’s own belief must be selected even if it does not precisely coincide with that person’s vocabulary. Each response is linked (unknown to the subject) to one of the four modes labeled above and described below. The four scores result in a profile of the respondent’s teleological orientation.

I: *Material*: Focuses on a material reality and depends on the five senses and human technology to validate one’s beliefs. Subordinates one’s inner experience to a need for physical confirmation.

II: *Supernatural*: Assumes a separate, divine realm from which one’s god rules daily events. Favors revelations from authorities about the unknown. Dismisses evidence contrary to belief.

III: *Mystical*: Believes unseen and spiritual energies control events. Sees humans as spirits with the ability to directly control outer reality through personal belief. Uses incantations and rituals.

IV: *Integral*: Accepts various ways of gaining knowledge, but subjects evidence to consensual validation by third parties. Seeks testable, multidimensional connections among all phenomena.

The questions are based on assumptions with no self-evident answers. Questions like “What is the design and purpose of nature? Why do things work as they do?” force subjects to select the best option for themselves from four like those below.

*Yahweh created me. Mind rules. God/Allah decides all.  
Nature is neutral. Allah/God is just. Humans have free will.*

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<sup>8</sup> Von Ward, Paul. Details and process are online at <http://www.vonward.com/selfassessmenttools.html>

*The universe is an accident. Life is governed by specific laws.*

The quadrant which receives the largest number of scores is a predictor of how the individual will respond to a wide range of ambiguous circumstances. It serves as a lens through which the individual interprets one's own behaviors, the words or actions of others, and external events. New issues or situations faced by the subject will be seen through the same unique perspective.

Since these teleological worldviews involve intangible aspects of life and the universe, they can be modified. Many people change from one supernatural religious sect to another, easily leaving behind the old and accepting a new theology. But such changes are not teleological; they do not require new existential assumptions. Conversely, a transformation from Evangelical Christianity to Atheistic Humanism does require a teleological death and rebirth of worldview assumptions.

Abandoning one and adopting a significantly different worldview can occur under a number of circumstances. Confrontation with clear evidence that one's existing beliefs are not supported by objective reality is disturbing. We have the option of shifting views to make facts and beliefs congruent. Or we can deny the new information and tighten our hold on the existing beliefs.

The internal conflict is best settled by adopting new assumptions. Without a satisfactory resolution, the individual remains psychologically confused. Psychological manipulations or physical force can also result in the replacement of old worldviews.

One example of forceful change of a nature-based worldview was the campaign to make other groups adopt a fictional cosmology created by followers of Emperor Constantine. They based it on one of the Middle East ancient gods (Yahweh) and conflated it with distortions of the teaching of the reformist Yeshua. Forcing this Roman worldview on Hellenic and Pagan natural-science cultures by physical and psychological warfare led to a millennia-plus era of the Dark Ages.

This illustrates how powerful economic or military forces can redact the prevailing story, insert another version, and change the course of history. Such a new teleological worldview can be used by autocratic groups (as in the supernatural Roman Christian strategy) as a psychological weapon to condition second and later generations to unquestionably accept its false assertions<sup>9</sup>.

Forced worldviews can be used *ex post facto* by plutocrats to maintain vested interests. They can be used to wage religious, cultural, economic, and military wars in and among civilizations.

Hitler's regime was a relatively recent effort to erase the teleological worldview in one region by demeaning psychological manipulations and vicious genocide with the goal of creating a new society based on different existential assumptions. He failed due to more resilient worldviews.

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<sup>9</sup> Von Ward, P. (2004) *Gods, Genes & Consciousness*. (Charlottesville, VA: Hampton Roads Publishing).

At this point it is obvious that such deeply ingrained teleological worldviews are developed by Sunday School-level lessons or mass media campaigns. However, we need to examine how simple words can assume such power over human responses to other people, ideas, and events.

### Neuroscience and Worldviews

Why do humans willfully dismiss new knowledge that would be useful to their security, health, or quality of life? Part of the answer is that our embedded worldviews have a prioritized set of brain reflexes based in previously created neural networks that link specific experiences with either pleasurable or painful feelings about them. If you have positive memories of a summer of rich food and sex in Rome, pictures of the city activate agonist neurotransmitters that facilitate a sense of pleasure. But, if you believe the Pope speaks for a God that demands penance for such sins, images of Rome may activate antagonist neurotransmitters that inhibit a sense of pleasure.

Without a set of consolidated neural memory circuits to direct incoming sensory data, the brain would become totally confused when presented with conflicting options. It would send mixed signals to both sensory and motor neurons. To avoid this, conscious organisms create a hierarchy of beliefs, ranging from a few that are considered immutable to many that are more mutable. This hierarchy (worldview) is continually reconsolidated by various levels of new learning.

Learning occurs through internal musings, active dialogue with others, and through emotional and physical experiences. This multiplicity of learning feedback loops makes it possible for individuals to influence others and be influenced themselves. However, any external input is mitigated by the individual's own worldview predispositions.

As an example, psychologists observe that people experiencing themselves as being in a low status generally generate more fear and other negative emotions than people who perceive themselves in a higher class. The latter group, with a less overpowering amygdala (base of fear response), can use their prefrontal lobes to act more rationally when in the same situation.

While class differentiations shape us, individuals can modify their sense of self with group support for a change in group assumptions about status. For instance, a racial hierarchy in a particular region that disempowers the lower class can reduce this amygdala-effect by creating a new set of social categories (religious, national or cultural).

At this point, it is important to note that these reciprocal social influences in the evolution of personal worldviews is only a part of the subconscious interactions among humans. While our physical brain appears to be separate from others, the consciousness that defines each of us is actually a local manifestation of a larger field of quantum particles activated by an information cloud in our quantum universe. Thus, we are influenced by, and influence, everyone else through subparticle entanglements. This insight from physics suggests concepts/beliefs embedded in the memory sections of one brain are, to some degree, linked to all other brains.



This reciprocal model of evolutionary development involves ongoing dances between two people, group interactions, and exchanges of views and experience at a distance. How we view ourselves in each of these relationships is important. David Brooks more recently<sup>10</sup> introduced to his interested readers several neuroscience insights I believe are relevant to this discussion.

In one experiment, Americans felt rewarded if they had considered themselves in a dominate situation. Japanese also experienced a sense of reward, but when they believed they were in a subordinate situation. That the brain's caudate nucleus activated a sense of reward equally for these opposite worldviews demonstrates different self-images still produce the same effect.

Another study reported that Arabs viewing images of painful circumstances for subjects they considered Arabs were perceived to involve a higher level of suffering. Jews in the study rated the level of pain higher when they considered the group suffering it was not Jewish. It suggests exposure to the same images elicits different reactions depending on a group's worldview.

In the same research, both Chinese and Americans believed the pain was higher when they perceived it was happening to members of their own group than to another group. Once again, the brain (anterior angulate cortices) reacted according to their worldview's self-identification.

This line of research suggests that humans have synapse-based positive and negative feed-back loops which select the neurotransmitters that determine whether we feel happy or sad, but which one expresses itself depends on existing embedded worldview choices. At this point, we do not understand how different intellectual concepts can become drivers of the same neural responses.

My intuition leads in the direction of energized ideas having a similar impact on brain cells as epigenetic forces have on DNA. In other words, the repetition of spoken ideas by individuals we perceive as authorities above us or a recalling of personal experiences lay down new memory-linked circuits. While this is speculative, some process interlacing abstract ideas and physical neurons is necessary to account for inculcation of new ideas in some people but not in others.

I am not aware of any behavioral neuroscience project focused on this conundrum. Much work focuses on recording the brain images evoked by thoughts, but these bottom-up responses do not tell us how top-down views are incorporated. Nevertheless, once these mind-brain connections are made, changes in worldviews become difficult.

### Exhuming Implicit Worldviews

During four decades of cross-cultural work on personal, scientific, political, and religious issues as a diplomat, educator, and psychologist, I was exposed to worldviews in a hundred countries. Identifying and understanding their varying assumptions about fundamentals was essential for cross-cultural communication and cooperation. This experience provided innumerable examples of behaviors linked to teleological worldviews like those discussed above.

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<sup>10</sup> Brooks, D. (Oct. 12, 2009) The Young and the Neuro. *New York Times*.

When people speak and act on worldviews so deeply inculcated since birth they are unconscious of the fact they are simply beliefs. At a conscious level the beliefs are taken as real as one's hand. These beliefs — regardless of the lack of objective, external evidence — form a gyroscope-type mechanism that insures the individual's behavior remains consistent with his or her subconscious sense of self. Such life-defining parameters are embedded over time in personality-developing experiences. They resist ideas or interpretations of events contrary to their worldview reality.

The last speech prepared for John F. Kennedy before his 1963 assassination included “We in this country, in this generation, are — by destiny rather than choice — the watchmen on the walls of world freedom. We ask, therefore, that we may be worthy of our power and responsibility. [He was then to quote “Except the Lord keep the city, the watchman waketh but in vain.”]

Had he lived, Kennedy's actions would have been taken with a sense of certainty that he was doing God's work and that he really had no other options. He would have had discussions with his advisors and heard public opinion, but the implicit assumption that he and his nation were instruments of God would never have been questioned. Yet it energized his decision making.

Working with renowned psychologist David McClelland in graduate studies at Harvard in the 1970s, I learned how one's unconsciously chosen words point to the emotions and behaviors that make up a unique personality. That research eventually led to the above-described process for exhuming people's largely unarticulated, but powerful mind-brain patterns like the following.

A fundamentalist Christian politician who “knows” that God speaks to him through his pastor will unquestioningly follow his dictates in making a decision for all citizens regardless of their views and civil rights. A fundamentalist Muslim who “knows” that Allah speaks to him through his imam will unquestioningly follow his dictates to fight the enemy, even killing himself. Such is the impact of theocratic worldviews on both believers and the victims of their policies.

A political example in the United States is evidence that a person's policies on public education “reflects the deepest differences between liberals and conservatives .... because every educational conversation must start with [a] fundamental philosophical question ... Our beliefs about the purpose of education are rooted in even deeper beliefs about the nature of humanity.<sup>11</sup>”

Author Sara Robinson's research corroborates the power of theocratic worldviews. She writes “conservative [religious-based] politics springs from one central premise: they believe that human beings are essentially fallen and deeply flawed. Human beings are swayed by uncontrollable passions, we make consistently bad choices and we are incapable of governing ourselves. Given our basic depravity, civilization can only work if we submit ourselves to the external guidance of society's appointed authorities, and stay on the straight and narrow path our betters have clearly marked out with rules, oversight and punishments.”

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<sup>11</sup> Robinson, S. Alternet. May 18, 2012. [http://www.alternet.org/story/155469/how\\_the\\_conservative\\_worldview\\_quashes\\_critical\\_thinking\\_-\\_and\\_what\\_that\\_means\\_for\\_our\\_kids%27\\_future?page=entire](http://www.alternet.org/story/155469/how_the_conservative_worldview_quashes_critical_thinking_-_and_what_that_means_for_our_kids%27_future?page=entire)

The worldview underlying this perspective is theocratic fundamentalism. From its perspective, people are born evil, destined to a life of eternal punishment by a demanding god unless they subject themselves to the conditions established by religious authorities. Given these beliefs, educational institutions set the boundaries, impose order by suppressing the child's own potential, and make sure that the existing world order must be preserved. Their social goal is to develop dependent personalities that continue to be susceptible to the will of religious leaders.

A positivist humanistic worldview has a different perspective: Self-realization is the goal of public education. Its purpose is to develop minds who challenge the status quo, seeking wider horizons for exploration. Self-responsibility, consensus building to promote social development, and experimentation with self-governing are crucial in this model of public education.

This worldview leads to public education policies that develop democratic principles. They are based on assumptions that people are basically good and can learn to be trusted to make moral choices. Students are encouraged to be different and explore their talents and aspirations.

A worldview shaped by unprovable assumptions gives the person holding it license to either dismiss factual material or create "facts" that are not real. A former U.S. Navy chaplain and leader of a fundamentalist religious group recently appeared on a TV show to criticize President Obama's personal view of same-sex marriage as a civil right. The chaplain did not say his view was also a personal opinion; he tied it to an unproven belief that that gay people secrete invisible, evil creatures which find and possess certain animals, turning them gay as well<sup>12</sup>.

Many scientists fall into the opposite parallel of the logical trap illustrated by the Navy chaplain. A researcher may conclude that we humans are alone in this solar system because he has not personally seen a member of a more advanced species on Earth. But he cannot logically declare that no such beings exist or that if they did, they have not been here. The circumscribed absence of evidence offered by the researcher does not prove that they might exist.

The relevant point in these two examples is that regardless of whether a particular worldview belief can be proven or not, it causes the same brain-mind stimulations of the central and peripheral nervous systems. Informal surveys suggest unvalidated major worldview beliefs exceed the number of major beliefs that are fact-based.

Where existential beliefs are involved, unproven ones seem to be the most difficult to change. Depending on the level of psychological threat involved, any effort to change one's unproven assumptions may only strengthen their emotional defensiveness. Simply pointing out the difference between belief and reality will be futile. Unless individuals perceive they have experienced a life-changing event (as Saul and Mohammed did in their respective roles in the creation of Christianity and Islam), changing worldviews is a complex process.

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<sup>12</sup> Webster, S. The Raw Story Website. May 18, 2012. <http://www.rawstory.com/rs/2012/05/18/former-navy-chaplain-insists-gay-demons-can-infect-animals/>

An educational or social change strategy that ignores the brain-based, emotionally cloaked reality of fundamental worldviews will be attempting to change the inner core of a human personality from the outside. It goes counter to evidence that worldview shifts are internal.

A case in point is a group concerned about the increasing dehumanization of various groups (homeless, unemployed, the mentally and socially disadvantaged, etc). They eschew teaching new concepts via textbooks or distant-media learning. They try to engage those doing the dehumanizing to learn from their own personal experiences. Much more research on hands-on-changes in beliefs that deal with worldviews is needed.

### Amending Worldviews

Obviously human worldviews change incrementally in our exploration of the Earth and beyond. They also marginally shift through the course of political and economic upheavals and cultural conflicts. As in the Roman case described above, significant new worldviews may be forced on a population over time by powerful groups with adequate resources and no qualms about force.

However, up to the present, no widespread, self-guided, transparent up-dating of our prevailing worldviews has been undertaken. A species self-experiment of such a magnitude would require a broad consensus among disparate groups who already acknowledge contradictions between new important areas of scientifically validated evidence and the tenets of out-dated belief systems.

Such an effort would be a daunting, if not impossible, task. Who would undertake a global effort of this magnitude? They would have to challenge the most coveted assumptions about the places of gods, humans, other intelligent species, and non-physical beings in this universe and beyond.

Nevertheless, I believe the relevant principles, methods, and technologies are now available to us. I also think that sufficient interdisciplinary evidence indicates that human consciousness is on a self-destructive evolutionary track. Fortunately, it appears, that evolving research efforts now in separate fields could be integrated to assemble a new, more plausible teleological worldview.

Given the dire nature of current social, economic, political, and technological trends, we really have no other option if we wish to avoid a self-imposed disaster of global proportions. Due to the prevailing worldviews held by the leaders of major institutions, they cannot be expected to take the lead. Self-identified open-minded scholars, social activists, independent-minded scientists, and highly motivated volunteers from all walks of life must take the lead.

Everyone motivated to make a contribution to the survival of *Homo sapiens* potential must demonstrate how out-dated, mistaken, self-retarding, and false assumptions in prevailing worldviews are responsible for the challenges that now face us. With such analyses in hand, they can challenge large institutions to introspectively analyze their contributions to the problem.

A few brave groups willing to challenge the status quo at a level of intelligence and specificity difficult to ignore may help the species avoid losing our place on this planet and beyond. They will need a coordinated campaign to construct a new teleological worldview based on the edges of scientific exploration, including areas of research dismissed by backward-looking scientists.

Because our present core assumptions in our existential and teleological worldviews derive from life experiences and changing cultural knowledge, we know they are mutable through new experience or learning. Small group efforts indicate that people can collectively transform their specific worldview assumptions if the individuals are generally predisposed. However, such change is not easy and requires serious steps of conscious reevaluation and belief change<sup>13</sup>.

### Considering Species-Saving Intervention

The case is very strong that humans are in a self-made crisis based on worldviews that benefit a few and subject the masses to their consequences. Modern supernaturalism and materialism are based on assumptions that are conducive to their founders control over human consciousness.

The same charge can be made about any institution that demands unquestioned faith in the infallibility of its leadership. Authority figures in political, military, corporate, and educational institutions use their control over resources, access to lucrative positions, and less tangible rewards as recognition and reputation to keep people in line with their prevailing worldviews.

At this point in history, there are no incentives for the most powerful shapers of worldviews to upset today's status quo. The extreme conflicts among belief systems generate fearful emotions in their devotees that enhance the leaders' power over them. Demagogues excite the emotions that raise volunteers, voters, and funds to protect their interests, even to the point of the faithful sacrificing themselves to cultural wars, even to taking part in suicidal missions.

Given their benefits, the most powerful institutions on Earth have no interest in supporting a revolution in human consciousness. However, without a constructive fundamental shift in worldviews, the challenges of climate change, over-population, internecine strife, deteriorating physical health, and isolation from other intelligent life cannot be met. We are immobilized by these opposing sets of worldviews.

The existential progress of our species is stalled between the grips of supernaturalism and materialism, and they get no help from large groups of ineffectual mystics who think they can dream us out of a quagmire. The most difficult obstacle to change is that we are caught between bellicose protagonists promoting mutually exclusive theism and atheism. We need a new path.

The teachers known as Buddha and Lao Tzu (two-and-a-half millennia ago) objected to the theistic model that had grown from early human experiences with more advanced beings. These two wise men saw that humans had been trapped by their own other-worldly projections on

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<sup>13</sup> Von Ward, Paul. *AHP Perspective* <[http://www.ahpweb.org/pub/perspective/nov2005/nov\\_menu\\_2005.html](http://www.ahpweb.org/pub/perspective/nov2005/nov_menu_2005.html)>.

legendary rulers. They urged avoidance of superstitious, anthropomorphic spiritual beliefs. Their teleological approach was to identify self-evident principles in nature.

The starting point was a neutral investigation — without *a priori* attitudes — in their attempts to penetrate the mysteries of life. They dealt with fanciful beliefs from a neutral position, analyzing them, and developing conclusions based on reasonable use of facts. Unfortunately, their and later Middle East efforts to develop natural science and philosophy were smothered by the god cults blossoming over the next two millennia. Supernaturalism reigned throughout the Western world.

A moment of opportunity for fact-based worldviews arose during the Renaissance. Science re-discovered the natural Hellenic worldview and broke through many superstitions. Unfortunately the new burst of scientific thinking was soon captured by the Industrial Revolution. The realm of supernaturalism was left to the theologians. Without a check on each other, the dominant human worldviews were divided into material science and mystical theology.

Neither perspective can move *Homo sapiens* to a truly new level of consciousness evolution. To create a new meta-worldview will take many independently-thinking scholars who can admit that their basic beliefs are just that — subjective assumptions based on partial information. They must be willing to open their research, writing, and teaching to address the following questions:

What do we really know about the origins of life? ,, the outer boundaries of human consciousness? ... the mechanisms that insure self-learning evolution? ... how deeply and widely do life forms self-propagate in the universe? ... the evidence of transcendent minds ... and more.

Such an effort will lead to greater consensus on tentative, open-ended answers to the preceding questions. All disciplines and institutions can become more vulnerable. They can publicly admit to the fragile basis of the continually shifting evidence that now underpins major worldviews.

Discoveries obtained in the above proposed search for answers will lead to a more inclusive worldview necessary to global community. Confessing that we do not know it all, regardless of our positions in society, has the possibility of holding together our threatened species.

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#### **Abstract**

Humans now face multiple existential, global threats of their own making. The greatest obstacle to an effective global response is the lack of a working consensus on strategy. With incompatible teleological worldviews, the human community is re-tribalizing into different realities. Looking at the circumstances with different assumptions about how the universe works, religious, political, and cultural leaders cannot even agree on the problem, much less solutions. The gap between materialism and theism makes agreement on any fundamental issue impossible. Insights into the mental and emotional power of worldviews now offer a new strategy to build a more universal worldview as a basis for better world communication and cooperation.