The Variety of Worldviews

Now that we have listed and examined the elements common to any worldview, we are in a position to look at the various types of worldviews. Once again, several preliminary comments are in order. First, no individual is likely to hold to every tenet of a particular worldview consistently. Human beings generally do not approach worldview as “logic machines” but as whole persons with varying dispositions, desires, etc. Moreover I might be in error in the details of the characteristics of each worldview and to that extent, few if any would fit the type perfectly.

Second, there are many different ways to classify worldviews, as writers on the worldview tradition have shown. James Sire for example, tends to mix his worldview types between philosophical categories (naturalism) and religions (Islamism).[[1]](#footnote-1) This type of classification is perfectly acceptable. Arthur Holmes organizes his worldview examination around what he calls “the contours of a worldview,” which he lists as “God and Creation,” “Persons,” “Truth and Knowledge,” “A Theistic Basis for Values,” and “Society and History.” Within some of those categories he sub-divides the category into “Philosophical” and “Theological” (as for example “God and Creation: Theological”).[[2]](#footnote-2) For the most part he avoids explicit labels for different worldviews. This too is a viable strategy. I believe I have made the point that there are different ways to “do” worldview analysis and each can serve a useful purpose.

My approach is different in several ways. First my divisions and labels are somewhat different from what might be thought of as ordinary. For example, I use the term “Secular” to define a worldview that is focused primarily on the role and scope of the state, rather than a typical use to describe a non-Christian culture. However, the label is related to the notion of a de-Christianization trend in that the state becomes the substitute for traditional religion. In addition, I do not address specific religious traditions such as Islam or Hinduism, except for the Christian worldview as the model for any worldview, a move to be expected in a work such as this.

In this chapter we will use the elements of a worldview as the pool from which to draw in order to fully define, or define as well as possible, each worldview named. For each one, we will apply those particular characteristics drawn from the list of elements that best fit or describe the worldview in question. For example, I define a category of worldview as “Enlightenment.” To best describe it, I may for example, apply from the element list topic labeled “How do we know and what can we know?” the epistemological approach that best fits that worldview. In the case of the Enlightenment worldview, the choice that best describes the epistemology is the standard empirical approach that arose in that period, represented by individuals such as Isaac Newton.

The categories or types of worldview offered here are intended to cover the broad scope of what we might identify as the major worldviews today. But in addition, I will include a historical category that will help give some needed context to the initial development of each worldview. Therefore each type contains a historical and a current component, linked by the particular characteristics of each worldview. It is hoped that types here will be both comprehensive enough to accurately address all relevant worldviews and that the types will not overlap.

One final point is that when I define a “Christian Worldview,” I mean that in essence there is a single, unified worldview that can be defined as distinctively Christian. Some readers may think this to be too narrow, but I will concede that this worldview is defined broadly enough to embrace those who disagree on matters not essential to intellectual integrity or one’s very salvation. Thus, for example, it is possible to include both conscious Arminians and Calvinists under the Christian category, even though I might believe one side is in error. It is also possible to have eschatological views of all kinds under the same tent, providing they all believe that Jesus Christ will in fact return in the future. But for example, it is not possible to embrace both those who deny God’s Trinitarian nature) and those who are orthodox Trinitarians under the same Christian worldview, even though superficially both may agree on every other category.

I have delineated six different types of worldview, with the Christian worldview coming last as the ideal:

1. The Enlightenment or Humanist Worldview
2. The Secular Worldview or Secularism
3. The Neo-Pagan Worldview or Neo-Paganism
4. The Postmodern or Post-Christian Worldview
5. The Pragmatic Worldview
6. The Christian Worldview

The Enlightenment Worldview

The best way to get at the Enlightenment worldview is to begin historically with the period from about 1680 to about 1800 in the West, the era known as the Enlightenment. In recent years, historians have contested many aspects of the traditional historiography of that period, but in general they do agree about some central features.[[3]](#footnote-3) For our purposes there is one central feature of the Enlightenment that also defines our designated Enlightenment worldview. During the Enlightenment, those elites who believed they were living in a new era emphasized that element of this era which would help sustain the movement. That element was human reason, not like the earlier idea of reason held together with faith, but an era of autonomous reason, in which humans could break free from old superstitions and authorities. The classic statement of this aspiration was by Immanuel Kant in his short contest essay, *What is Enlightenment?[[4]](#footnote-4)* Kant wrote:

“Enlightenment is man's emergence from his self-imposed nonage. Nonage is the inability to use one's own understanding without another's guidance. This nonage is self-imposed if its cause lies not in lack of understanding but in indecision and lack of courage to use one's own mind without another's guidance. *Dare to know!* (*Sapere aude.*) "Have the courage to use your own understanding," is therefore the motto of the enlightenment.”

One must have the courage to cast off the bonds of both religious superstition and authority and political authority and think for oneself. This is a classic statement advocating *autonomous* reason, unlimited by any external authority. Kant also wrote a little book entitled *Religion Within the Limits of Reason Alone*, in which he turned the earlier works by those such as Thomas Aquinas and John Locke on their heads.[[5]](#footnote-5) Aquinas had argued that faith and reason could co-exist with faith being first in priority and then seeking understanding through reason.[[6]](#footnote-6) Locke had modified that position to say that reason and faith could co-exist on equal terms and that reason would not contradict faith.[[7]](#footnote-7) But Kant had imbibed the confidence of Enlightenment thought that derived in great part from the rise of empirical science and the method of reasoning used in that discipline. This epistemological approach was epitomized by individuals like Isaac Newton, whose work was widely popularized and whose basic framework imitated.[[8]](#footnote-8)

Although the Enlightenment exhibited other important characteristics, its central defining characteristic was reason and its autonomous authority. Moreover it was empirical reason that held sway, even though rationalism still dominated for a time in some regions (like the German states) and religious authority persisted in some parts of the church. In fact some of the essential characteristics of the Enlightenment were logical outworkings of the central authority of reason. So of all the elements of a worldview, the first, epistemology seems to be at the heart of the Enlightenment worldview. But we cannot stop there with the historical. As I said many other emphases flowed out of the historical Enlightenment focus on empirical reason. Likewise many emphases flow out of the current focus on reason in the modern Enlightenment worldview.

The current Enlightenment worldview did not come to be in an unmodified form however. It had to go through various defining stages from the end of the eighteenth century to the present. Each of these stages represented extensions, clarifications and elaborations of the initial period’s ideas, but without rejecting the original essence of the core ideas. I will briefly each of these phases and then elaborate on the characteristics of the Enlightenment worldview. The first phase after the Enlightenment, the Neo-Enlightenment, was initiated with the work of August Comte, who envisioned a world in which science reigned and experts governed.[[9]](#footnote-9) Science was the last and highest phase of civilization, after theology and then philosophy. As second phase of the continuing Enlightenment included two strands: (1) Philosophical Materialism and (2) Darwinism. Both of these arose around 1860, though both already had precursors as far back as the eighteenth century. Materialism was especially popular in Germany, while Charles Darwin’s ideas began in Great Britain and were quickly adopted by scientists and theologians in Europe and America. Darwinism was even appropriated for the social sciences.[[10]](#footnote-10) As can be inferred, each of these intellectual movements placed science at the top of any hierarchy of knowledge, and therefore empirical knowledge at the top any hierarchy of epistemology. For Materialism, all was essentially matter in motion. The soul was non-existent, as was the metaphysical in general. Representatives of this idea included Ernst Haeckel and Ludwig Feuerbach. Darwinism posited the evolution of all species from one root being over a very long time period through the mechanism of adaptation and the survival of the fittest. Though these two sets of ideas were focused mainly in science, they had implications also for ethics, politics and economics which were exploited. However humans were constituted or developed their reasoning ability was still the primary attribute. Finally in the early twentieth century we see the logical conclusion of the development of Enlightenment ideas in Logical Positivism and Logical Empiricism, often associated with the “Vienna Circle” of philosophers and scientists. In essence Logical Positivism was a radical epistemological project that sought to divide meaningful statements from meaningless ones and in the process to eliminate metaphysics. A statement was meaningful only if (a) it was empirically verifiable in theory or (2) it was true by definition, that is, the way it was defined made it true.[[11]](#footnote-11) Verifiability became an issue and Karl Popper argued that the proper way to solve this “problem of induction” was to adopt a standard of falsifiability to arrive at knowledge through empiricism. Nevertheless it is easy to see the central, even exclusive, role for empirical knowledge at the complete expense of special revelation. In general, reason was taken to its extreme in terms of its importance.

Following the 1930s, this emphasis on human reason was put to the test and found wanting by many.[[12]](#footnote-12) However, in general, very few scholars wished to return to special revelation, preferring to find some other ways to achieve some sort of accommodation that would bring “comfort.” Still others simply gave up. But this is a story for other worldviews. The Enlightenment worldview is still very much alive, even if weakened in some points and in some circles. So we must pursue its characteristics a bit more.

Though we have defined the Enlightenment worldview by its governing principle of reason, this is not all we can say about it. First, regarding reason itself, the Enlighteners of the eighteenth century believed they would, by the proper use of reason, arrive at objective truth. They were not relativists. Neither are modern holders an Enlightenment worldview. The relativist position will be seen in other worldviews. Moreover, they did and do believe that reason is limited by the objects of inquiry, and by the human mind, but not nearly as limited as say, a Christian would have it. The capacity of reason to operate, though limited (see Kant’s noumenal world), is yet expansive, to the point that many argue that human reason can eventually, if used properly, solve all or most of the problems of the world and can actually make humans better.

In one sense, if we say that reason is the governing principle of this worldview and if humans possess a huge potential to make use of reason, then we could argue that man himself is the center of the Enlightenment worldview. As Pope wrote, “The proper study of mankind is man.”[[13]](#footnote-13) So we now have two characteristics of the Enlightenment worldview: (1) the high place of autonomous reason and (2) man as the object of self-veneration. The corollary to this is the basic goodness or neutrality of human nature. Man is able to perfect himself and his society. To this I will add, implied by Kant’s statement, a certain attitude of anti-authoritarianism directed especially at the church, but also at the existing political authorities and institutions. Of course if reason has the capability to accomplish what Enlightenment worldview advocates believe, then those authorities can be improved and even perfected. This brings in a fourth characteristic related to the above view of man, the idea of progress as a grand hope for the indefinite future.[[14]](#footnote-14) Progress is indefinitely possible because as man improves, obstacles to that progress disappear.

If the world is going to be a utopia for the Enlightenment worldview, how does one practically accomplish that. The first answer is education. Education was one of the major tenets of the actual Enlightenment and remains an important element of the modern Enlightenment worldview. Education is exalted, the more the better, but always firmly controlled by the experts who “know.” Progressive educators like John Dewey and many others advocated a particular content for education that centered on Enlightenment elements.[[15]](#footnote-15) Education here is used in a broad sense, not merely to mean formal education, but based on an intellectualist view of man without the limitations of sin.[[16]](#footnote-16) For an intellectualist the mind informs the will. Thus education is crucial.

In a more general sense, the Enlightenment commitment to its epistemology led to the strategy of natural explanations for physical phenomena. W. T. Stace captures the commitment: “Do not introduce God to explain something if natural causes explain it equally well.”[[17]](#footnote-17) At best God has become a remote causal agent. A further characteristic of this worldview has to do with the question of teleological (purpose-oriented) character of the world. The Enlightenment worldview has reduced almost to complete rejection the belief in a world-purpose.[[18]](#footnote-18) Since the metaphysical realm has been eliminated for all practical purposes, so has any purpose in the world itself governed by that realm. Finally, the Enlightenment worldview has led to the predictable collapse of the belief in a moral order that is objective. If there is no purpose in the world there will be no values that are external to man, objective, above him.[[19]](#footnote-19) All values will be subjective, arising through evolution, the community, or some other source. The paradox is that the Enlighteners themselves sought objectivity and believed even ethics could find a foundation, even if it was in a secularized natural law.[[20]](#footnote-20) Enlightenment has travelled a long road in relation to ethics.

The Secular Worldview

If the Enlightenment worldview still dominates, it is followed closely by the Secular worldview. The term “secular” might seem unfortunate to describe the actual content. But the meaning of the word itself is simply “world,” from the Latin saeculum, in most contexts, especially those we will be concerned with. But “world” does not necessarily connote non-Christian, though it has come to have that meaning. My usage for this worldview does connote a non-Christian character, but not in a broad sense. I am using “secular” in a very narrow sense related to secular state, as opposed to the church.[[21]](#footnote-21) So essentially, the state, not God, is the governing center of the Secular worldview. This worldview is supported by both political leaders and political advocates and constituents, the former hoping to gain more power or to serve some utopian (well-meaning) goal, the latter hoping to gain goods and services from the state.

If we probe deeper we may find only a nuance of difference between the Secular and the Enlightenment worldviews. But the difference is important. Both worldviews are ultimately centered on man. In the case of the Enlightenment worldview, it is reason which humans use to advance their own welfare, while in the case of the Secular worldview it is an external entity—the state—that is the mediating instrument for advancing the welfare of humans. While man’s welfare, not the glory of God, is the primary goal of both worldviews, each relies on a different means to achieve those ends. Here I am concerned with the notion of the state as a “secular deity.”[[22]](#footnote-22) We will turn our attention now to the specific characteristics of the Secular worldview, bearing in mind the general governing principle of “statism.”[[23]](#footnote-23)

First, the Secular worldview supports government as the solution for most basic problems of humanity. This is not surprise. What is surprising is the intensity of the preference, if that is the proper word, for governmental solutions. The language of the Secular worldview frequently approaches religious fervor and language. Government is often spoken of as like a savior.[[24]](#footnote-24)

Because the Secularist, as defined here, has placed government on the throne, he obviously and consciously has little room for metaphysical concerns. The Secular worldview tends to ignore or marginalize religion in general, and Christianity specifically, because such concerns are beyond the “here and now,” with which the Secularist worldview is vitally interested. To be sure, in most cases a Secular worldview is tolerant of religion so long as it is personal, private and does not in the realm reserved for government. If the Secularist did seriously read the Gospel of Matthew, Chapter 22, verse 21, he would most likely interpret it in such a way as to give a great deal to “Caesar” and very little to God, if, as some do, he believed a god existed. It is worth noting however that there are a fair number among those adhering to a Secular worldview who vow allegiance to God or a god. Interestingly, they are not hesitant to bring their own interpretation of what that God would want the state to do, to the policy table, while denying the more orthodox their own terms of engagement. In its pure form Secularism cannot tolerate rivals and its tendency is to appropriate more and more from civil society and to place those concerns in the public realm.[[25]](#footnote-25)

An important factor to keep in mind in our discussion of Secularism is that in reality this worldview is based on a kind of “vacuum theory.” After the Enlightenment placed reason in the place of God, Kant showed persuasively that our great confidence to know with certainty was misplaced. Reason has its limits, and cannot be extended to the non-material realm with any sort of certainty, nor even to the phenomenal realm, the “here and now” with absolute Cartesian certainty.[[26]](#footnote-26) For many then the center was removed from the Enlightenment worldview, which had to be replaced by something. That something was the state as virtual savior. This brings in two more characteristics of the Secular worldview: its Pragmatism and its phenomenalism.

Since I have separated out Pragmatism for treatment as a worldview in itself, I will be brief here. This philosophy, uniquely American in origin, but influential on many later non-American thinkers, began, arguably, with the writings of Charles Peirce, who was not recognized until William James credited Peirce some years later for its origins.[[27]](#footnote-27) The essential theory is expressed by Peirce:

“The opinion which is fated to be ultimately agreed to by all who investigate, is what we mean by the truth, and the object represented in this opinion is the real. That is the way I would explain reality [and truth].”[[28]](#footnote-28)

John Dewey adopted and adapted Peirce and James’ ideas and became the most famous of Pragmatists. Dewy was also very active in political and economic issues, writing about what the state ought to do. His Pragmatism played no small role, alongside his broader ideological Progressivism.[[29]](#footnote-29) Pragmatism’s place in the Secular worldview is as a sort of methodology. It may not have a substantive idea of its own as to what the state ought to do, but when it is combined with certain political ideologies, it serves as the determiner of how a policy application ought to be pursued by the state. The hypothesis of government “works.”[[30]](#footnote-30)

Phenomenalism

Phenomenalism is a philosophical view that has influenced method in several fields, including sociology, economics, and politics. Its relevance to the Secular worldview is indirect but important. The roots of Phenomenalism stretch back at least to David Hume, who undercut the traditional idea of causation. But Immanuel Kant also contributed to its development. Both raised the issue of the relationship between sense data and causal connections. Before Hume and Kant, philosophers might say that if something E (an effect) follows something else called C (a potential cause), then we may suppose, having met some further conditions, that C caused E in fact.[[31]](#footnote-31) But Hume pointed out that one cannot actually “see” causes, and therefore our usual way of connecting C and E disappears. We are left only with “habits” and “phenomena.” There is not logical reason why anything should occur. Extrapolating this notion to the Secular worldview, one can only observe external behavior under certain circumstances. One cannot tell why they behave the way they do; nor can one propose alternative behaviors based on causal connections. Government then is reduced to a more or less a descriptive science, and morality also becomes merely descriptive. There is no discernable moral order in the universe. Since it is meaningless to speak about right and wrong in a transcendent sense, because we cannot say anything about metaphysical realities with any certainty at all, the only consistent alternative is to “take a poll” (not literally), that is, to “count.” Reality reduces to counting phenomena. In cultures influenced by the Secular worldview, this is precisely what occurs more and more frequently.

Another characteristic of the Secular worldview is its tendency toward an organic theory of the state. Organicism has a history going back more formally to Hegel in the early nineteenth century. By Organicism in state theory I mean the idea that the state in some way transcends the natures of its citizens.[[32]](#footnote-32) The state is in a sense itself an “individual more complete and of higher value than the singular individuals who compose it.”[[33]](#footnote-33) If this is true, then it would follow that the individuals are component parts whose *telos* is simply to serve the state that has become essentially a type of secular deity. In addition, right, justice, good, become in essence what the state defines them to be, as it is the supreme entity.[[34]](#footnote-34) Historically, this conception of the state influenced several German theorists after Hegel, including Johann Bluntschli, who in turn influenced Woodrow Wilson.[[35]](#footnote-35) Elements of this theory continue to have an attraction to Modern Liberals and Progressives. Ironically, the theory was very popular among Fascists.[[36]](#footnote-36)

The Organic theory lends itself well to its logical end of a “Messianic State.”[[37]](#footnote-37) Once again, Hegel’s words describe Messianic Statism:

“The Universal is to be found in the state…The state is the divine idea as it exists on earth…We must therefore worship the state as the manifestation of the divine on earth, and consider that, if it is difficult to comprehend nature, it is harder to grasp the essence of the state…the state is the march of God through the world.”[[38]](#footnote-38)

The state to Hegel, as for many others after him, was the result of the inexorable forces in history in dialectical tension working through his Absolute Ideal.[[39]](#footnote-39) Other examples of the same idea include Abbe Raynal, who wrote, “The state is not made for religion, but religion is made for the state, “ and then added that that religion was worship of the state.[[40]](#footnote-40) Rousseau also sounded much like a Messianic Statist, though he may not have wanted to.[[41]](#footnote-41)

Moreover, if the “god ”of the Secularist is the state, the perfect man, analogous to the sanctified man of Christianity, is the creation of the “Superman” or *Ubermensch* depicted by Nietzsche. Of course, as Voegelin facetiously wrote, “he is a man-made being who will secede tge sorry creature of God’s making.”[[42]](#footnote-42) The ideal man of such nationalistic zeal also appeared “imaginatively” in the works of Condorcet, Comte, Marx and Nietzsche, and, later in Communist and National Socialist-Fascist writers.[[43]](#footnote-43)

The direct corollary of this view is the nature of man. For those who hold a Secular worldview, man must be perfectible, or else the state will not be able to achieve its ultimate utopian aims.[[44]](#footnote-44) The Christian view of man has been rejected and replaced by the dream of the future perfected human, an idea that refuses to die in the modern Secular worldview. The Secular worldview has followed the Enlightenment path, seeing humans as either innately good or neutral, in both cases corrupted by their environment, that is society.[[45]](#footnote-45) Ironically however, the state also needs imperfect individuals who will give it obeisance. In addition, the Secularist finds himself in a dilemma in the face of wars, starvation, oppression, etc. Unfettered freedom and reason do not seem to have helped bring about perfection. One solution is to blame “society,” in terms of economic deprivation, lack of basic needs (or wants), simple inequality, injustice (that is, social injustice[[46]](#footnote-46)) and other external factors. The Secularist might also attribute failures to ignorance or mistakes, invoking Enlightenment ideas again. But problematically, even “society” is made up of people. Nevertheless, Statism has been a powerful worldview. Messianic Statism can be seen today in varying forms. It was born of Enlightenment optimism and wedded to that period’s love affair with science. But it also fits perfectly into the inevitable vacuum created as men pushed God further out of the universe, replacing him with reason, and later with utopian ideas of the state, but always with man himself.

Neo-Paganism

In the past few decades we have seen a resurgence in what can only be termed “spirituality.” This type of religious belief is mainly of a personal and individual variety. But we have also seen an increase in cult-like or “religion-like” movements, such as radical Environmentalism. These and other types of appeals or approaches to the metaphysical will be the subject of the Neo-Pagan worldview. A great deal of the influence for this new religious consciousness has come from the Far East, but not all of it; in addition some of the ideas of certain aspects of this worldview derive from the distant past (for example, ancient Gnosticism). I have labeled it Neo-Pagan because I am concerned with new movements of spirituality and religious activities, not the traditional denominations or world religions *per se*. I will however of necessity draw upon some of the characteristics of more traditional religions which have been adapted to the newer forms.

Neo-Paganism is explicitly religious in its tenor, and so we can state at the outset that the governing center of this worldview is a kind of spirituality, religiosity or religious consciousness. James Sire has divided what I call Neo-Paganism into two separate strands: (1) Eastern Pantheistic Monism and (2) New Age Spirituality.[[47]](#footnote-47) Both, as he puts is, are paths open to Westerners who would otherwise be driven to Nihilism by the Enlightenment worldview. I would add that they might also have been driven to Skepticism. Eastern Pantheistic Monism is antirational, syncretistic, quietistic (that is, passive), and relative opposition to technology. New Age Spirituality is much more eclectic, but for Sire, it is based ultimately on the evolutionary movement of humans and culture to a higher consciousness.[[48]](#footnote-48) But Neo-paganism is not a coherent system of philosophy or theology. In this respect it is very unlike the Enlightenment worldview. The fact is, Neo-Paganism can be seen just about everywhere and anywhere in modern society. One finds it among company executives, homemakers, the media, motion picture artists, academics, politicians, and almost every other vocation. One even finds Neo-Paganism in organized churches. On the surface there seem to be no common factors among these diverse groups. But what draws them together, at least for logical purposes of analysis, is their acknowledgement of spiritual realities as central to their lives and as existent in the universe. Under this rubric I will also include what is called the New Age Movement, which has, at least formally, lost some of its earlier force.

Only recently have scholars begun to devote significant attention to Neo-Paganism as a phenomenon worthy of study.[[49]](#footnote-49) Though most of these works do not deal explicitly with Neo-Paganism they have been helpful in addressing various groups and ideas that fall within it. With the most recent work, we can begin to construct a picture of this rather amorphous but powerful worldview. I will emphasize what is common to the great variety of expressions of this worldview.

The major characteristic of Neo-Paganism, its central governing feature, is the recognition of spiritual reality. A worldview consists of the answer to the “big” questions of life, one of them being the nature of reality. The Enlightenment worldview tended to deny spiritual, transcendent or metaphysical propositions either any truth-value, or to actually deny their existence.[[50]](#footnote-50) The Enlightenment worldview’s epistemological philosophy and its ontological philosophy could not accommodate those realities. The same principle applied to the Secular worldview. The Neo-Pagan worldview however not only does not deny metaphysical reality but embraces it as unquestionable, but on grounds different from the other two worldviews.

The Neo-Pagan worldview deviates from both typical Enlightenment and Christian views with respect to how we know what we know. For a Neo-Pagan knowledge is attained intuitively and directly, bypassing the exercise of discursive reason or an appeal to objective revelation. Generally Neo-Pagans do not rely on any form of revealed truth, though they may appeal to works consistent with their views. We could label this epistemological approach mysticism, and that would not be too far from an accurate description. Mysticism of course has existed for centuries, even before the Christian era. But in the context of Christianity, it began to flower in the late to high Middle Ages.[[51]](#footnote-51) In addition, some followers of Neo-Paganism also appeal to Gnosticism as an inspiration, including the Gnostic epistemology.[[52]](#footnote-52)

For Mysticism, a complex phenomenon, knowledge is based in experience. But experience can be an ambiguous word. So let us begin with a definition of Mysticism itself, before we move to its epistemology:

“A (purportedly) super sense-perceptual or sub sense-perceptual experience granting acquaintance of realities or states of affairs that are of a kind *not* accessible by way of sense perception, somatosensory modalities, or standard introspection.”[[53]](#footnote-53)

Notice the last part of the definition, the words that indicate that a mystical experience does not come by way of traditional vehicles of human cognition. Sense perception refers to empirical mode of knowing, while “standard introspection” refers to traditional rationalism. This does not mean that the Neo-Pagan would deny reason outright, but that certainly he would expand its reach. The ways of achieving this knowledge are varied and subtle. One way for some Neo-Pagans to know (and what they know is the reality of “god” or a higher consciousness) is pure intuition. Knowledge is salvation, and ignorance is the source of evil. If one can achieve the “higher consciousness” or super-rationality, then one is at least on the way to ultimate union with the highest reality.[[54]](#footnote-54) In fairness, this form of Neo-Pagan mystical epistemology is considered radical by many, who insist that a valid experience must be mediated in some way, say by meditation of revelation.[[55]](#footnote-55)

Second, Neo-Pagans, as I mentioned, seek to achieve a reality in their experience that goes beyond the physical world to some numinous reality. The Neo-Pagan generally wishes to sense the “presence of the divine” as that is understood by the individual or sect.[[56]](#footnote-56) The actual nature of the reality may differ but it is higher than empirical or rational knowledge can reach. It is usually either a direct experience with the divine or a direct, esoteric knowledge that the uninitiated do not possess.[[57]](#footnote-57) There may be no way to verify the truth value of such experiences, but for Neo-Pagans the experience itself is self-attesting. The problem then with Neo-Pagan conceptions of reality is not mainly the experience itself, which can be verified, but their interpretation of it.

With regard to the search for the direct and unmediated higher reality, one historical note is worth emphasizing. The Enlightenment worldview produced two important (and devastating) results. It eventually succeeded in removing the necessity of the Christian God from the explanation of the world and life. Primarily through the work of Kant, transcendent realities (noumena) were excluded altogether from causal explanation and from knowing.[[58]](#footnote-58) The next logical step was to remove God effectively from cultural life. Second, the Enlightenment worldview succeeded in filling the void left by the “disappearance” of God with its own reality, produced by the modern empirical epistemology and the related exaltation of man. Science and the idea of the perfectibility of humans would lead to a new era of progress. By the time the new trends toward ambiguous spirituality had begun to flourish, in roughly the 1960s, the Enlightenment worldview had made the success of those new ideas almost inevitable. Individuals who had been “searching” were drawn by these new trends. The church itself was not prepared to deal with the new situation and in fact the widespread theological liberalism, a product of Enlightenment thought, only further undermined the effectiveness of Christianity.[[59]](#footnote-59)

As to reality outside the human being, Neo-Paganism sees the cosmos, besides being ,manifested in the self, also expressed in the visible universe of the senses, “and in the invisible universe Mind at Large), accessible through altered states of consciousness.”[[60]](#footnote-60) The visible or material universe really does exist for most Neo-Pagans. But the world can be “re-ordered” by the self via the Mind at Large, which makes up its own rules regarding the rules of physics, chemistry and biology and can also create “alternative worlds.”[[61]](#footnote-61)

We can now move to other characteristics of Neo-Paganism. Specifically I want to examine the Neo-Pagan views of human nature and ethics. If we use Sire’s division, we can say that New Age Spirituality holds a view of human nature as evolving into a higher consciousness. This means that people become morally better, more intelligent and more peaceful, but only if they themselves move themselves to change.[[62]](#footnote-62) Optimism is inherent in the New Age aspect of Neo-Paganism, but contingent optimism.[[63]](#footnote-63) The self is at the center of life.

Contrast the New Age view of human nature with the Eastern. For Eastern thought (Hinduism, stretching back to Gnosticism), rather than the self perfecting itself, it’s goal is to “lose oneself in the whole.” The person as person disappears, though the essential nature remains as merged with “the One.”[[64]](#footnote-64) The soul of each individual is in fact the soul of the cosmos. It appears that any given person may do evil or good, but the essential nature is not dispositionally sinful.

If we move to ethics, in both versions of Neo-Paganism, good and evil do not exist, although some more cultish religious movements will have a version of ethics. New Age worldviews are explicit about this because their roots lie in Eastern thought. As Herrick writes, “the highly evolved or “multisensory personality” will understand God as…”Conscious Light.” Evil then, is simply the absence of such Light.”[[65]](#footnote-65) There is no strong sense of either avoiding what we would define as evil or opposing it. One must look to him or herself to find ethical standards.[[66]](#footnote-66) Moreover, it appears that Neo-Paganism in general takes an evolutionary stance on ethics, if ethics can even be said to be externally directed, not surprising given the evolutionary element in this worldview.

Neo-Pagans do not “worship” or venerate or acknowledge the Christian God, though they are, as we have seen, definitely aware of the spiritual realm. Deity may be a force, a person, or even oneself. And finally, Neo-Pagan views of history have been cyclical in the past, though today, it is difficult to even attach a coherent label to their philosophy of history. In fact besides the cyclical theory, many are attracted to an evolutionary theory of development of the human consciousness, a la Hegel and others.[[67]](#footnote-67)

The Neo-Pagan worldview is difficult to systematically define and describe. In fact, it is still in the process of “evolving.” We might say that though the one thing all Neo-Pagans hold in common is a higher reality, a supra-mundane spiritual reality, they are very much diverging on what that looks like, and even on how to achieve it. But it is a given that they do not accept the revelation of the Bible (unless reinterpreted through radical mystical eyes or esoteric ideas), and thus they do not accept the God of that revelation.

The Postmodern or Post-Christian Worldview

Once again we are faced with a daunting task in trying to define and describe Postmodernism. Not only to Christians have difficulty with it, but scholars of all types have disagreed for some thirty years as to what exactly this worldview is. Postmodernism as a cultural and philosophical term did not arise until after World War II, though it had precursors which laid a foundation for it.[[68]](#footnote-68) D. Wade Hands reminds us that “At least one philosopher has the audacity to give it [Postmodernism] a ‘birthday’: ‘The dynamiting, at 3: 32 P. M. on 15 July 1972, of the (Le Corbusier-based) Pruitt-Igoe housing development in Saint Louis.’”[[69]](#footnote-69)

One definition that may prove helpful is given by Gary Aylesworth:

“That postmodernism is indefinable is a truism. However, it can be described as a set of critical, strategic and rhetorical practices employing concepts such as difference, repetition, the trace, the simulacrum, and hyperreality to destabilize other concepts such as presence, identity, historical progress, epistemic certainty, and the univocity of meaning.[[70]](#footnote-70)

This definition contains most or all of the major features of the Postmodern worldview. For now will define Postmodernism in a minimalist fashion, to avoid possible unnecessary quibbles, as a loose, but strident, critique of the Enlightenment and its worldview, and a desire to undermine it through criticism. Those who call themselves Postmoderns, or whom we can fairly label as such, cannot agree on what ought to be constructed or imposed upon the ruins of the old Enlightenment or Modernist view. But there are some common themes in Postmodernism that can at least provide some guidance.[[71]](#footnote-71)

To begin with the first worldview question: How does one know anything and can one know anything if one is a Postmodernist? This fundamental question does not apply to all Postmodern varieties, especially not to the cultural Postmodernism, but it does have great relevance to philosophical Postmodernism of individuals such as Derrida and others. Postmodernism contests modernism, and modernism is another term for the Enlightenment project or worldview. As Hands has put it, “it contests reason-centered universalism and, thus, challenges traditional views of rationality in both science and society.”[[72]](#footnote-72) Allan Megill argued that Postmodernism “aestheticized” knowledge, “basically doing top knowledge what modernism did to aesthetics.”[[73]](#footnote-73) To put it differently, “One implication of this aestheticization is a general suspicion of ‘theory.[[74]](#footnote-74)’” Lyotard calls this “incredulity toward metanarratives.”[[75]](#footnote-75) To be more specific Postmodernism does not take empirical reasoning, the prime source of “knowledge” in the Enlightenment, with the same attitude of trust as moderns did and do. Their alternative to traditional epistemology however is not as clear. It appears that the void left by the undermining of Enlightenment views of knowledge has led to a proliferation of different approaches to knowing, making Postmodern epistemology essentially antifoundationalist. Interestingly this position does not mean that Postmodernism undermines every other worldview in its totality, even though it would express suspicion about the overall metanarrative created by that worldview. So for example, though Postmodernism has consciously undermined the “imperialism” of the Enlightenment worldview, it does the open a path to exploration of say, certain aspects a Christian worldview. But to the extent the Christian worldview is considered a metanarrative, it too is challenged. For philosophical Postmodernists, this is just because, for one reason, the epistemology claims too much. It is foundationalist, being rooted in a special revelation that claims comprehensiveness, something Postmodernism cannot tolerate. Postmodernism would require a much more humble approach to knowing.

Postmoderns are also particularly fond of speaking of a sociological or constructivist approach to knowledge. This fits well with their rejection of metanarratives and allows knowledge to socially evolve among groups. While this constructivism is not necessarily associated with Postmodernism, it is certainly not disfavored. Knowledge is situational, contextual, that is, embedded in some social or cultural environment.[[76]](#footnote-76)

A second worldview question: For the Postmodern, what is reality? How does Postmodernism define reality? As always, the question of reality (ontology) is related to that of knowledge. What is the nature of that which is known? Postmoderns do not adopt a theory of reality that views what we perceive as corresponding to the way things really are, even though they do use empiricism. The issue is in the interpretation of what is perceived. Gary Aylesworth explains it this way:

“Hyperreality is closely related to the concept of the simulacrum: a copy or image without reference to an original. In postmodernism, hyperreality is the result of the technological mediation of experience, where what passes for reality is a network of images and signs without an external referent, such that what is represented is representation itself. In Symbolic Exchange and Death(1976), Jean Baudrillard uses Lacan's concepts of the symbolic, the imaginary, and the real to develop this concept while attacking orthodoxies of the political Left, beginning with the assumed reality of power, production, desire, society, and political legitimacy. Baudrillard argues that all of these realities have become simulations, that is, signs without any referent, because the real and the imaginary have been absorbed into the symbolic.”[[77]](#footnote-77)

The key to understand what the above quote means is the mention of the use of signs and symbols (to represent reality), but which do not have any “eternal referent.” They do not actually point to any external reality that corresponds to those signs. Language is a game with no necessary correspondence to anything outside the game. This is because one cannot possess any way to know that what one “talks about” corresponds to it. Postmodernism leaves one then with both a deficit in knowledge and a lack of reference to external reality.

This does not mean the Postmoderns reject reality, as if they were some sort of Berkleyians “on steroids.” They do believe some reality exists, but they do not and cannot know what it is. They have disconnected themselves from any reliable notion of what reality is like. They can certainly talk about a constructed reality, but there is no confidence that the content of the discussion is real as it is constructed. It is worth noting here that in certain respects this aspect of Postmodern epistemology and ontology are very close to Thomas Kuhn’s historically determined view of the advance of scientific knowledge.[[78]](#footnote-78)

Closely tied to both the question of knowledge and that of reality, as well as to other crucial questions, is the concept and practice of deconstruction. Deconstruction is also related to hermeneutics, in this case, philosophical hermeneutics, not a method used to discover meaning. This idea of deconstruction may well be what people think of when they do consider Postmodernism. Gary Aylesworth has once again provided a useful definition of this approach:

“…in philosophy, it signifies certain strategies for reading and writing texts…. Because at its functional level all language is a system of differences, says Derrida, all language, even when spoken, is writing, and this truth is suppressed when meaning is taken as an origin, present and complete unto itself. Texts that take meaning or being as their theme are therefore particularly susceptible to deconstruction, as are all other texts insofar as they are conjoined with these. For Derrida, written marks or signifiers do not arrange themselves within natural limits, but form chains of signification that radiate in all directions…. It is not so much a theory about texts as a practice of reading and transforming texts, where tracing the movements of différance produces other texts interwoven with the first. While there is a certain arbitrariness in the play of differences that result, it is not the arbitrariness of a reader getting the text to mean whatever he or she wants. It is a question of function rather than meaning, if meaning is understood as a terminal presence, and the signifying connections traced in deconstruction are first offered by the text itself. A deconstructive reading, then, does not assert or impose meaning, but marks out places where the function of the text works against its apparent meaning, or against the history of its interpretation.”[[79]](#footnote-79)

This was a very long quote, but deconstruction is not an easy idea to articulate. The essential idea is that all texts have a certain “play” in them, and that one ought to subvert traditional meanings in order to expose all possible views or meanings. True, the philosophical Postmodern does not believe meaning is completely subjective, but if one examines some more popular Postmodern writings, the meanings of texts may appear to be unlimited, or limited only be the individual imagination. Texts are in practice transformed.

Hermeneutics then becomes a process in which the interpreter is active and “more than equally determinative” in extracting meaning.[[80]](#footnote-80) Original or authorial intent is not particularly important simply because “objective noumenal facts are unattainable” (from Kant).[[81]](#footnote-81) Meaning begins and ends with “one’s own conscious and subconscious interaction with the text.”[[82]](#footnote-82) Multiple meanings may result depending on the interpreter and time. One is “free” to “play” with a text since its author has given no “authoritative, univocal meaning to it” even if it might have some single meaning.[[83]](#footnote-83)

An example of the result of Postmodern epistemology and view of reality comes from politics. The Postmodern worldview is suspicious of any metanarrative and will tend to reject it. That includes political metanarratives such a “liberalism,” “conservatism,” or any other general explanation for human behavior or normative theory of how humans ought to behave, government ought to “work” or the world ought to “be.” Therefore political relations are reduced to a fragmented series of identity groups, each seeking to exercise power.[[84]](#footnote-84) To put it another way, politics is defined by power, that is, the group that is able to dominate. Truth becomes secondary at best, if not irrelevant.

Moving on to other crucial questions, Postmodernism we ask, “What are human beings like”? We may include here another related question, “What is right and wrong”? (Ethics). I will treat these together. Human nature for a Postmodern is a very complex concept. But it seems to reduce to an anti-essentialist theory. That is, humans do not possess a nature that is stable or unalterable, but rather is a “de-centered” self. Related to this view of human nature are cultural relativism, perspectival pluralism and social constructivism, together making up a part of the Postmodern agenda.[[85]](#footnote-85) This view resembles Existential ideas of human nature as a non-nature, which Postmodernism has partial roots.[[86]](#footnote-86)

With no essential nature, at the least we can say that humans cannot be either inherently good or sinful. This raises the further question, together with that of objective knowledge and reality, of whether any objectively defined ethical values can exist. It would certainly seem to follow, as Gene Veith has argued, that:

“If there are not absolutes, if truth is relative [along with reality and human nature] then there can be no stability, no meaning in life. If reality is socially constructed, then moral guidelines are only masks for oppressive power….”[[87]](#footnote-87)

Once again, we resort to Martin Heidegger, one of the progenitors of Postmodernism. David Levin has written that “Heidegger’s ‘humanism’ is radically open: it places…it releases us, as human beings, in an openness-to-being which is radically de-centering.” Moral responsibility therefore becomes an illusion, one “shaped by our own Western bourgeois culture.”[[88]](#footnote-88)

We now have three questions left: What is the Good or the *summum bonum*?, Does God exists and if so, what is He like?, and Does history have meaning? These questions have fairly straightforward answers for the Postmodern worldview. There is obviously no objective good or highest good, or, if there were, we cannot know it. Individuals can find their own good or highest good for themselves, but it cannot be asserted for anyone else as a metanarrative. We can say the same about God, though some “Christian” Postmoderns have said that their rejection of Enlightenment reason has opened the door once again for spiritual reality, including the Christian God.[[89]](#footnote-89) As for history, it too both as a discipline and as a body of knowledge about the past, is subjected to the Postmodern “subversion” of metanarratives.[[90]](#footnote-90) History is a human reconstruction of the past and cannot possibly be recovered “as it actually occurred.” In fact, there is no guarantee one could even get close to the past or know if one had. It is the epistemology of Postmodernism that tends to be the central weapon used against traditional history.

Pragmatism

Pragmatism is the quintessentially American philosophy and worldview. While it began as a philosophical orientation it has developed as a more general approach to thought and life. Pragmatism is the product of the thinking of Charles Peirce, William James, John Dewey, and recently, Richard Rorty (who is also associated with Postmodernism). The definition of Pragmatism has been confused at times, with some defining it simply as “doing what works.” That however is only a small part of the definition. One of the best definitions comes from one of its founders, Charles Peirce:

“The opinion which is fated to be ultimately agreed to by all who investigate, is what we mean by the truth, and the object represented in this opinion is the real. That is the way I would explain reality [and truth].”[[91]](#footnote-91)

If the notion of truth and reality are at the heart of Pragmatism, then this definition tells us that what is true is what is agreed to by a certain number or quality of observers or observations. So Pragmatism seems to be a sort of socially constructed knowledge and reality. In a certain sense, this may translate into “what works” if what works has been agreed to socially and not through some traditional, recognized method of achieving objective knowledge and reality. Right away then we see the Pragmatic views of both knowledge and reality. In any objective sense, they have largely disappeared.

Human nature is a non-issue for Pragmatism. Our view of what human beings are like cannot be essentialist, as it cannot be a fixed (or even quasi-fixed) idea of nature. In fact, the Pragmatic view of human nature is a socially constructed view. We really do not know what human nature is like, if it is anything at all. The latter view is close to the Existentialist idea of a non-essentialist nature that is “made” by each human being. The difference is that the Pragmatist has nothing objective to say about human nature at all, except what is socially accepted and therefore can be “cashed out.”

What is right and wrong according to the Pragmatic worldview? Pragmatic ethics has the following elements:

1. Society achieves morality, not lone individuals.[[92]](#footnote-92)
2. No moral criteria are beyond revision, but ethics, Pragmatists argue, may converge toward something objective.[[93]](#footnote-93)
3. An ethical system or beliefs may be valid for a society, but may cease to be so as a society progresses.[[94]](#footnote-94)

As one can see, this view of ethics, even though it claims that it could be objective, in that it might concede some ethics “out there,” leaves little or no room for any strong objective view, let alone a Christian view.

What is the *summum bonum* for a Pragmatist? Or, we may ask, what is defined as “the good”? Pragmatism posits no necessary highest good nor any necessarily timeless good. Society must define the good, and society will change over time, even if the Pragmatist allows for a theoretical good. If there were a highest good, it might be to be scientific.

God may or may not exist, and He may or may not possess certain characteristics. But since society must enable a movement to knowledge about God, it is difficult to believe Pragmatists would in the long run accept the Christian God as He is. Since Pragmatists have a materialistic and naturalistic orientation, God cannot be an actual existing being. However one can, as William James and others argued, express a “will to believe.”[[95]](#footnote-95)

Finally, does history have meaning? Does history have a pattern? James T. Kloppenberg has written, “Pragmatism has affected the practice and attracted the attention of prominent American historians for more than a century. Some historians have expressed an explicit debt to the ideas of pragmatist philosophers, whom they have credited with opening their eyes to perspectivalism and instrumentalism….still others have been unself-conscious or unwitting pragmatists, embodying in their scholarship the idea that all knowledge is provisional and the idea that all propositions should be tested by a community of inquiry, the central concepts of pragmatism that were given their most sophisticated elaboration by Charles Sanders Peirce, William James, and John Dewey.”[[96]](#footnote-96)

Once again, it is the relativistic tendency in Pragmatism that attracts historians. Those of a Pragmatic bent are tempted by the non-objective nature of history they can find. There may be many ways to see the past and no one way is the way—much like Postmodernism. History now is emptied of any metaphysical movement. There is effectively no God driving history, even if one willed to believe in God or a god.

Conclusion

This chapter may have seemed to be on the technical side. To an extent that is true, as it involved an understanding of philosophical and theological trends. These trends in turn filled the content of the non-Christian worldviews we examined. While elements of some of the worldviews were consistent with Christian-biblical concepts, by and large the worldviews above are, as a whole, deviations from Christianity. At the same time they have held a fascination for many over the centuries, even for Christians who were (and are) taken in by the potential they had for explaining the world and man (and God) in different ways than standard orthodox Christian doctrine would teach. This has always been the fatal attraction, since the Garden, that promised to make man like God. In some form or other, all these worldviews continue to exist. They generally are not found as pure types, as there rarely exists a pure type such as those I have posited above. But there is no doubt that these worldviews do exist in recognizable form. And they remain as dangerous to the Christian worldview as their pure types. In the next chapter we will lay out the Christian worldview in detail and contrast it clearly with non-Christian worldviews.

1. James W. Sire, *The Universe Next Door*, op. cit. [↑](#footnote-ref-1)
2. Arthur F. Holmes, *Contours of a World View*, op. cit, Table of Contents. [↑](#footnote-ref-2)
3. On debates about the period, see Dorinda Outram, *The Enlightenment* (New Approaches to European History). Cambridge University, 2013. [↑](#footnote-ref-3)
4. *An Answer to the Question: What is Enlightenment*? (1784). [↑](#footnote-ref-4)
5. 1793. [↑](#footnote-ref-5)
6. See his *Summa Theologia*, op. cit. [↑](#footnote-ref-6)
7. *The Reasonableness of Christianity as Vindicated in the Scriptures* (1795). [↑](#footnote-ref-7)
8. See Mordechai Feingold, *The Newtonian Moment: Isaac Newton and the Making of Modern Culture*. Oxford University, 2004. [↑](#footnote-ref-8)
9. See his *Introduction to Positive Philosophy* (1835), edited by Frederic Ferre. Hackett, 1988; this work contains selections from his *Course of Positive Philosophy*. [↑](#footnote-ref-9)
10. On Materialism, see F. A. Lange, *History of Materialism* (1877), 3 vols. Routledge, 2016. For Darwin, see of course the *Origin of the Species* (1859). For an excellent overview of Darwinian thought and its reception, see James R. Moore, *The Post-Darwinian Controversies: A Study of the Protestant Struggles to Come to Terms with Darwin in Great Britain and America, 1870-1900*. Cambridge University, 1981. [↑](#footnote-ref-10)
11. # On the Vienna Circle and Positivism, see Friedrich Stadler, *The Vienna Circle: Studies in the Origins, Development, and Influence of Logical Empiricism* (Vienna Circle Institute Library). Springer, 2015.

    [↑](#footnote-ref-11)
12. On this story as it relates to epistemology, see D. Wade Hands, *Reflection Without Rules: Economic Methodology and Contemporary Science Theory*. Cambridge University, 2001. [↑](#footnote-ref-12)
13. Alexander Pope, *An Essay on Man* (1733). [↑](#footnote-ref-13)
14. On the idea of progress, see Robert Nisbet, *History of the Idea of Progress*. Basic Books, 1980. Not everyone in the Enlightenment itself believed in unlimited progress: some secular scholars and many Christian theologians rejected this perfectibility notion. See also John Passmore, *The Perfectibility of Man*, op. cit. [↑](#footnote-ref-14)
15. See Lawrence Cremin, *The Transformation of the School: Progressivism in American Education, 1876-1957*. Vintage, 1964. Locke, an early Enlightener, was a strong advocate of education, given his view of humans that they were blank slates. Education could make the difference. [↑](#footnote-ref-15)
16. For a discussion of the intellectualist versus voluntarist positions, see Alan Guelzo, *Edwards on the Will: A Century of American Theological Debate*. Wesleyan University, 1989. [↑](#footnote-ref-16)
17. W. T. Stace, *Religion and the Modern Mind*. Lippincott, 1952. [↑](#footnote-ref-17)
18. Ibid., 107. [↑](#footnote-ref-18)
19. Ibid., 116. [↑](#footnote-ref-19)
20. See [↑](#footnote-ref-20)
21. The term “state” means for this work a formal institutional arrangement with coercive power, however it may be constituted. [↑](#footnote-ref-21)
22. See David Nicholls, *Deity and Domination: Images of God and the State in the 19th and 20th Centuries*. Routledge, 2003. [↑](#footnote-ref-22)
23. I do not argue that the state in itself is an evil. It was established by God (Romans 13, Genesis 9) and has (at least historically) functions consistent with God’s revealed will. My argument is against the state or “statism” that eliminates God and replaces Him with itself as a secular deity. [↑](#footnote-ref-23)
24. See Herbert Schlossberg, *Idols for Destruction*. Thomas Nelson, 1983. [↑](#footnote-ref-24)
25. The term “civil society” deserves some defining. It is that realm of human interaction “between” the state above and the mere individual below. It is a voluntary institution that nevertheless engages in many collective actions. See John R. Ehrenberg, *Civil Society: The Critical History of an Idea*. New York University, 1999. [↑](#footnote-ref-25)
26. See Kant, *Critique of Pure Reason*, op. cit. [↑](#footnote-ref-26)
27. See D. Wade Hands, *Reflection Without Rules*, 218ff, on this early development. [↑](#footnote-ref-27)
28. Charles S. Peirce, “How to Make Our Ideas Clear” (1878), in Charles S. Peirce, *Selected Writings*. Editied by P. P. Wiener. Dover, 1966, 133. [↑](#footnote-ref-28)
29. On Dewey and the earlier Pragmatists in their relation to Progressivism, see James T. Kloppenberg, *Uncertain Victory: Social Democracy and Progressivism in European and American Thought, 1870-1920*. Oxford University, 1986. [↑](#footnote-ref-29)
30. See G. W. F. Hegel, *The Philosophy of Right*, translated by T. M. Knox (1821). Oxford University, 1962. [↑](#footnote-ref-30)
31. See W. T. Stace, *Religion and the Modern Mind*, 174-175. [↑](#footnote-ref-31)
32. G. R. G. Mure, “The Organic State,” *Philosophy*, vol 24, no. 90 (1949), 205. [↑](#footnote-ref-32)
33. Ibid. [↑](#footnote-ref-33)
34. Thomas Hobbes, *Leviathan* (1651) had something of the organic motif but did not develop it as much as German scholar would in the nineteenth century. See F. W. Coker, *Organismic Theories of the State: Nineteenth Century Interpretations of the State as Organism or as a Person*. AMS Press, 1967. [↑](#footnote-ref-34)
35. See Wilson, *The State: Elements of Historical and Practical Politics, A Sketch of Institutional History and Administration*. D. C. Heath, 1918. [↑](#footnote-ref-35)
36. See Benito Mussolini, with Giovanni Gentile, “The Doctrine of Fascism” (1935). [↑](#footnote-ref-36)
37. This is not quite the same as Messianic Nationalism, which some scholars trace to the French Revolution. See J. L. Talmon, *The Origins of Totalitarian Democracy*. Preager, 1961. [↑](#footnote-ref-37)
38. Hegel, *Philosophy of Right*, op. cit, [↑](#footnote-ref-38)
39. Hegel did not have in mind a totalitarian state, but rather a liberal state, but his words have been co-opted by many totalitarian thinkers. [↑](#footnote-ref-39)
40. *Historie Philosophique de Deux Indes*, bk, 4, 53ff. [↑](#footnote-ref-40)
41. See Eric Voegelin, *From Enlightenment to Revolution*, ed. By John Hallowell. Duke University Press, 1975, esp. Ch. 12. [↑](#footnote-ref-41)
42. Ibid., 171. [↑](#footnote-ref-42)
43. Ibid. 302. [↑](#footnote-ref-43)
44. Voegelin writes that statism is “the soured remnants of the Enlightenment idea of inevitable progress.” Ibid. [↑](#footnote-ref-44)
45. On the views of man in political theory generally, see Christopher J. Berry, *Human Nature* (Issues in Political Theory). Humanities Press International, 1986. [↑](#footnote-ref-45)
46. The social justice issue has taken center stage of late. See Michael Novak and Paul Adams, *Social Justice Isn’t What You Think It Is*. Encounter Books, 2015. [↑](#footnote-ref-46)
47. James W. Sire, *The Universe Next Door*, Chapters 7 and 8. [↑](#footnote-ref-47)
48. Ibid., 145, 169-173. [↑](#footnote-ref-48)
49. See for example, John P. Newport, *The New Age Movement and the Biblical Worldview: Coflict and Dialogue*. Eerdmans, 1998 and James A. Herrick, *The Making of the New Spirituality: The Eclipse of the Western Religious Tradition*. Intervarsity Press, 2003. On more esoteric movements see for example Robert H. Nelson, *The Holy Wars: Economic Religion Versus Environmental Religion in Contemporary America*. Pennsylvania State University Press, 2010. [↑](#footnote-ref-49)
50. In fact Atheism gained ground after the eighteenth century, as did philosophical Materialism. [↑](#footnote-ref-50)
51. See Bernard McGinn, *The Foundations of Mysticism: Origins to the Fifth Century* (Vol. 1 *The Presence of God: A History of Western Christian Mysticism*). Crossroad, 1991. [↑](#footnote-ref-51)
52. The literature on Gnosticism is immense. For a good overview see Birger A. Pearson, *Ancient Gnosticism: Traditions and Literature*. Fortress Press, 2007. [↑](#footnote-ref-52)
53. Jerome Gellman, “Mysticism,” *Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy*, at <http://plato.stanford.edu/entries/mysticism/#8>, retrieved July 27, 2016, emphasis added. [↑](#footnote-ref-53)
54. See John P. Newport, *The New Age Movement and the Biblical Worldview: Conflict and Dialogue*, 62. [↑](#footnote-ref-54)
55. Bernard McGinn, *The Foundations of Mysticism*, Appendix. [↑](#footnote-ref-55)
56. See Rudolph Otto, *The Idea of the Holy*, translated by John W. Harvey. Oxford University, 1923, 1958. [↑](#footnote-ref-56)
57. The latter was most common for the Gnostics, who believed that ignorance of “who I am” and “where I am going” was overcome by gnosis, leading to salvation. Such knowledge was only for the “elect.” See Kurt Rudolph, *Gnosis: The Nature and History of Gnosticism*. HarperOne, 1987. Rudolph’s survey focuses on a few Gnostic sects, but generally is reliable. [↑](#footnote-ref-57)
58. On this, see Royce Gruenler, *Meaning and Understanding: The Philosophical Framework for Biblical Interpretation*. Zondervan, 1991. [↑](#footnote-ref-58)
59. See Kenneth Cauthen, *The Impact of American Religious Liberalism*. Harper and Row, 1962, and more generally, Claude Welch, *Protestant Thought in the Nineteenth Century, 1799-1914*, 2 volumes. Yale University, 1985-1988. [↑](#footnote-ref-59)
60. James Sire, *The Universe Next Door*, 186. [↑](#footnote-ref-60)
61. Ibid., 188. [↑](#footnote-ref-61)
62. Ibid., 171-172. [↑](#footnote-ref-62)
63. Some New Agers see technology as a positive development to help humans in their quest for “godlikeness.” [↑](#footnote-ref-63)
64. Sire, *The Universe Next Door*, 156-157, 181-182. [↑](#footnote-ref-64)
65. James A. Herrick, *The Making of the New Spirituality*, 268. [↑](#footnote-ref-65)
66. Ibid., 269. [↑](#footnote-ref-66)
67. John Newport, *The New Age Movement and the Biblical Worldview*, 500ff and James Sire, *The Universe Next Door*, 207. [↑](#footnote-ref-67)
68. We might mention existentialism, phenomenology and post-structuralism, which I will discuss briefly below. [↑](#footnote-ref-68)
69. Roy Bhaskar, *Philosophy and the Idea of Freedom*. Blackwell, 1991, 139, quoted in Hands, *Reflection Without Rules*, 242, fn, 20. [↑](#footnote-ref-69)
70. Gary Aylesworth, “Postmodernism,” *Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy*, at <http://plato.stanford.edu/entries/postmodernism/> (2015), retrieved August 6, 2016. [↑](#footnote-ref-70)
71. It is not clear that one can even speak of any coherent Postmodern worldview, but scholars and non-scholars continue to write and talk as if it did exist. I shall follow the same path. [↑](#footnote-ref-71)
72. See Hands, *Reflection Without Rules*, 242. [↑](#footnote-ref-72)
73. Allan Megill, *Prophets of Extremity: Nietzsche, Heidegger, Foucault, Derrida*. University of California, 1985. [↑](#footnote-ref-73)
74. Hands, *Reflection Without Rules*, 243. [↑](#footnote-ref-74)
75. Jean-Francois Lyotard, “The Postmodern Condition,” in *After Philsophy: End or Transformation?* ,edited by K. Baynes, J. Bohman and T. McCarthy. MIT Press, 1987, 74. [↑](#footnote-ref-75)
76. See D. Wade Hands, *Reflection Without Rules*, 190-194, 242-245. [↑](#footnote-ref-76)
77. “Postmodernism,” *Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy*, op. cit. [↑](#footnote-ref-77)
78. See Kuhn, *The Structure of Scientific Revolutions*, First edition. University of Chicago, 1962. [↑](#footnote-ref-78)
79. “Postmodernism,” *Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy*, op. cit. [↑](#footnote-ref-79)
80. See Royce Gruenler, *Meaning and Understanding*, Chapter 3. [↑](#footnote-ref-80)
81. Ibid., 100. [↑](#footnote-ref-81)
82. Ibid. [↑](#footnote-ref-82)
83. Ibid., 102. [↑](#footnote-ref-83)
84. The “power” narrative was a favorite of Michael Foucault. See *Power/Knowledge: Selected Interviews and Other Writings, 1972-1977.* Vintage, 1980. [↑](#footnote-ref-84)
85. Peter Loptson, *Theories of Human Nature*. Second edition. Broadview, 2001. [↑](#footnote-ref-85)
86. See the work of Existentialist writers such as Jaspers, Heidegger, Sartre, and Camus who spoke of an unformed nature that must “make itself” through the authentic exercise of freedom. [↑](#footnote-ref-86)
87. Gene Veith, *Postmodern Times: A Christian Guide to Contemporary Thought and Culture*. Crossway, 1994, 72. [↑](#footnote-ref-87)
88. David Michael Levin, *The Opening of Vision: Nihilism and the Postmodern Situation*. Routledge, 1988, 3. [↑](#footnote-ref-88)
89. But not necessarily a god rooted in any metanarrative doctrine. See [↑](#footnote-ref-89)
90. See Ernst Breisach, *On the Future of History: The Postmodern Challenge and Its Aftermath*. University of Chicago, 2003. [↑](#footnote-ref-90)
91. Charles S. Peirce, “How to Make Our Ideas Clear” (1878), in Charles S. Peirce, *Selected Writings*. Editied by P. P. Wiener. Dover, 1966, 133. [↑](#footnote-ref-91)
92. See Hugh LaFollette, "Pragmatic Ethics," [*The Blackwell Guide to Ethical Theory*](http://www.hughlafollette.com/papers/pragmati.htm), edited by Hugh LaFollette. [Wiley-Blackwell](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Wiley-Blackwell), 2000. pp. 400–419. [↑](#footnote-ref-92)
93. Ibid. [↑](#footnote-ref-93)
94. Ibid. [↑](#footnote-ref-94)
95. See Jeff Jordon, “Pragmatic Arguments and Belief in God,” *Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy*, at <http://plato.stanford.edu/entries/pragmatic-belief-god/>, retrieved August 11, 2016. This approach is called doxastic voluntarism and was also held essentially also by John Dewey. [↑](#footnote-ref-95)
96. “Pragmatism and the Practice of History: From Turner and Du Bois to Today,” *Metaphilosophy*, volume 35, numbers 1 and 2 (January, 2004), 202. [↑](#footnote-ref-96)