

Five Worldviews - by Dennis McCallum

Sometimes it seems as if there are more philosophical and religious views than any normal person could ever learn about. In fact, there are more than six thousand distinct religions in the world today. However, some people are surprised to find that the world's religions and philosophies tend to break down into a few major categories. These five worldviews include all the dominant outlooks in the world today. This chart is adapted from *Christianity: The Faith That Makes Sense* by Dennis McCallum (Tyndale), and can be found on www.xenos.org.

WORLD-VIEW	REALITY	MAN	TRUTH	VALUES
Naturalism Atheism; Agnosticism; Existentialism	The material universe is all that exists. Reality is "one-dimensional." There is no such thing as a soul or a spirit. Everything can be explained on the basis of natural law.	Man is the chance product of a biological process of evolution. Man is entirely material. The human species will one day pass out of existence.	Truth is usually understood as scientific proof. Only that which can be observed with the five senses is accepted as real or true.	No objective values or morals exist. Morals are individual preferences or socially useful behaviors. Even social morals are subject to evolution and change.
Pantheism Hinduism; Taoism; Buddhism; much New Age Consciousness	Only the spiritual dimension exists. All else is illusion, maya. Spiritual reality, Brahman, is eternal, impersonal, and unknowable. It is possible to say that everything is a part of God, or that God is in everything and	Man is one with ultimate reality. Thus man is spiritual, eternal, and impersonal. Man's belief that he is an individual is illusion.	Truth is an experience of unity with "the oneness" of the universe. Truth is beyond all rational description. Rational thought as it is understood in the West cannot show us reality.	Because ultimate reality is impersonal, many pantheistic thinkers believe that there is no real distinction between good and evil. Instead, "unenlightened" behavior is that which fails to understand essential unity.
Theism Christianity; Islam; Judaism	An infinite, personal God exists. He created a finite, material world. Reality is both material and spiritual. The universe as we know it had a beginning and will have an end.	Humankind is the unique creation of God. People were created "in the image of God," which means that we are personal, eternal, spiritual, and biological.	Truth about God is known through revelation. Truth about the material world is gained via revelation and the five senses in conjunction with rational thought.	Moral values are the objective expression of an absolute moral being.
Spiritism and Polytheism Thousands of Religions	The world is populated by spirit beings who govern what goes on. Gods and demons are the real reason behind "natural" events. Material things are real, but they have spirits associated with them and, therefore, can be interpreted spiritually.	Man is a creation of the gods like the rest of the creatures on earth. Often, tribes or races have a special relationship with some gods who protect them and can punish them.	Truth about the natural world is discovered through the shaman figure who has visions telling him what the gods and demons are doing and how they feel.	Moral values take the form of taboos, which are things that irritate or anger various spirits. These taboos are different from the idea of "good and evil" because it is just as important to avoid irritating evil spirits as it is good ones.
Postmodernism	Reality must be interpreted through our language and cultural "paradigm." Therefore, reality is "socially constructed."	Humans are nodes in a cultural reality – they are a product of their social setting. The idea that people are autonomous and free is a myth.	Truths are mental constructs meaningful to individuals within a particular cultural paradigm. They do not apply to other paradigms. Truth is relative to one's culture.	Values are part of our social paradigms as well. Tolerance, freedom of expression, inclusion, and refusal to claim to have the answers are the only universal values.