

I SOME BRIEF COMMENTS ON WORLDVIEW THEORIES

a) WORLDVIEW AS UNCONSCIOUS AND CONSCIOUS

Hiebert's definition:

Worldview is the fundamental cognitive, affective and evaluative assumptions a group of people make about the nature and which they use [*more or less consciously*] to order their lives.

Two extremes:

- a) Worldview as 100% conscious. –leaves no meaning to the concept of worldview :
- b) Worldview as 100% unconscious. –makes man a social/cultural animal



Freud made man a sexual animal with his emphasis on the unconscious drives in us. Carl Jung develops on this and talks about a collective unconsciousness
"The most fundamental reality in Jung's psychology is the collective unconscious. It is our source of energy, and it shapes ^{Balance} our structures ^{the} most fundamental dimensions of our experience" (Jones and Butman, 121)

Edward T. Hall "the cultural unconscious, like Freud's unconscious, not only controls man's actions but can be understood only in painstaking process of detailed analysis" (Beyond Culture, 43)

-perhaps most of the profane writers will be on the right end of the continuum because they tend to believe themselves to be highly developed animals.

James W. Sire has different and very illuminating way of putting it:

Being created in the image of God "...we participate in *part* in a transcendence over our environment. Except at the very extremities of existence – in sickness or physical deprivation - a person is not forced to any necessary reaction." (The Universe Next Door, 28)

Hoffecker has a similar view in "Building a Christian Worldview" where he says that the process by which we think of our ideas is a unique capacity given by God (Vol. 1, x)

- Too much emphasis on the unconscious part of the worldview might lead to an understanding of man that is not compatible with the Bible.
- Too much emphasis on the unconscious will also reduce the possibilities for change of worldview.

The analogy of worldview as glasses to balance the conscious and unconscious:

- God is the giver of the (Christian) glasses
 - Some got them before they knew what glasses are
 - Some got them later, giving life a new perspective

Unconscious => Balances
Collective Conscious

- The purpose of glasses is to look through not at. People see your glasses more easily than you do yourself. Nevertheless, sometimes your attention is on the glasses itself -cleaning / adjusting on the nose..
- Some people gets tired of wearing glasses. They throw them away – only to find themselves searching new ones or the pair they have thrown away because they need glasses to understand the world. Others try to modify their glasses into bifocal lenses, or look over the glasses for a short period of time.

God wants us to have both an unconscious and ~~un~~conscious biblical worldview
Deuteronomy 6, 4-7.

b) THE “SHAPE” OF THE WORLDVIEW

We all agree on the insights gained from Parsons, Shills and Kluckhohn’s dimensions of worldview.

The dimensions seem to be universal, but we should remember that the “size of the circles” will often vary.

- i) West emphasis on the cognitive.
- ii) Japan emphasis on the affective.
- iii) Where is the Biblical emphasis?

II THE JAPANESE WORLDVIEW

a) ROOT METHAPHOR TO UNDERSTAND THE JAPANESE WORLDVIEW

Stephen Pepper says that “a world hypothesis is determined by its root metaphor” (World Hypotheses, 96) Pepper’s approach is very western philosophical. But he provides insight in how to understand a worldview from one focal point.

This approach can be reductionistic, especially in a pluralistic society. However, to get a grip on the Japanese worldview I find it very useful.

Ruth Benedict suggested, at least indirectly, that “shame” should be taken as the focal point for understanding Japan. (The Chrysanthemum and the Sword, 222ff.). Her study became a classic, but it is also been criticized as reductionistic.

Takeie Sugiyama Lebra suggests taking “Social Relativism” as the focal point for understanding Japan.

- priority to the social bonds (the truthfulness of a statement etc.).
- relativism because there is no prime mover. (Libra, 2-9)

[The latter is the relativism we see in the rise of postmodernism in the west. First God and later naturalism have lost (are loosing) their functions as prime movers]

Consequences from social relativism:

Cosmology: Indifference to transcendental realm and a lack of differentiation between living and dead, god and man. (monism)

Morality: Monitored situationalism. No anarchy no absolutes.
Guilt is inseparable from social relationship.

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Social Relativism

by Social Bonds

R →
(Social)
(Relative)
Social
Bonds

In-group: Japanized foreigners disturb their belongingness.
At-group (identity is taken from social interaction)
 Japanese seems to be really alive only when in a group.
Reciprocity: Any kind of gift or service results in "on" which is social credit for the donor, and social debt for the receiver.

b) THEMES AND SET THEORIES APPLIED TO JAPAN

Ruth Benedict notes that there is even a folklore in the United States which says that whatever we do they do the opposite (Chrysanthemum and Sword, 10). There are also baseball and car production movies showing the huge differences between the US and Japan.

One explanation of the huge differences between the two cultures is that the Japanese culture in many ways is quite extreme. Morris Opler notes that extreme cultural themes can be destructive. Hence, Opler's themes and counter-themes is apt to be illuminating for understanding the basic assumptions behind an extreme culture which are still going strong.

Dependency-----Security
 Formal appearance-----Cultural nudity (*vestia to formality*)
 Male dominance (outside home)-----Female dominance (home)

Further, I find it useful to combine the Opler's Theme theory with Hiebert's Set theory. My conviction is that a culture can not have only fuzzy or only bounded sets. Rather, extreme fuzzy sets is likely to lead to the bounded sets as a counter - theme.

In Japan there are:

Fuzzy boundaries between: Living and dead, Buddhist and Shinto, good and bad.

Bounded boundaries between: Japanese and foreigner, executive and vice executive etc.

III EVANGELISM

Evangelism:

So far we have dealt with the possibility for change and some aspects of the Japanese worldview. As missionaries, as change agents, we need to which elements that have to be changed to make the worldview compatible with the Biblical worldview.

Elements of the Japanese worldview -in group vs. out group -monism -situational ethics -reciprocity	a) Can be used in evangelism b) Neutral c) To be changed
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My hunch is that the categories above needs to be nuanced. Some of it is good and some of it has to be changed.

In addition to awareness to the different elements, we also need an understanding of changing not taking place in a vacuum. It always change from something to something else. And it is a process which need time. Perhaps 10 years for the major shifts and the smaller changes never stops because it is a part of our sanctification.

The aim is that the believers are equipped with a biblical worldview leading to a biblical behavior, and most of all, a faith that glorifies God.

Reference List:

Hall, Edward T. 1976 *Beyond Culture*. New York: Anchor Books.

✧ Lebra, Takie S. 1976 *Japanese Patterns of behavior*. Honolulu: Univ. of Hawaii Press.

Sire, James W. 1997 *The universe next door: A basic worldview catalog*, 3.ed. Downers Grove, Illinois: Inter Varsity Press.