

Six Primary Worldviews

A **worldview** seeks to answer three questions: (1) Where do we come from and why are we here? (2) What has gone wrong with the world? (3) What can we do to make it better? Theism is the most widely accepted worldview in the United States, with approximately 67% of Americans identifying as Christians, 2% as Jewish and 1% as Muslim (see [Statistica](#)). Even so, few Americans have consciously developed a specific worldview, and many of them embrace various aspects of pantheism, naturalism, humanism and postmodernism. Pantheism is the dominate worldview throughout Asia, and polytheism is prevalent in areas of the world that are predominantly tribal. Many aspects of pantheism and polytheism overlap, so the two terms are sometimes used interchangeably. (Download PDF with live URL links at rw360values.org/6worldviews.)

	Reality	Humankind	Truth	Values
Theism Christianity (More) Judaism (More) Islam (More)	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 a supernatural and absolute moral being and therefore remain constant over time.
Pantheism Buddhism Hinduism Taoism New Age Consciousness More on worldview	Only the spiritual dimension exists. All else is illusion. 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 everyone.	Humankind 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.	Ultimate reality is impersonal, so pantheistic thinkers believe that there is no real distinction between good and evil. "Unenlightened" behavior is that which fails to understand essential unity.
Polytheism Spiritism, Animism Thousands of Religions More on worldview	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 have spirits associated with them and, therefore, can be interpreted spiritually.	Humankind is a creation of the gods like the rest of the creatures on earth. Tribes or races often 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. 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.
Naturalism Atheism Agnosticism Existentialism More on worldview	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.	Humankind 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.
Humanism Marxism More on worldview	Emphasizes the value and agency of human beings, individually and collectively, and relies on rationalism and evidence over the transcendent or supernatural.	Humankind is part of nature and has emerged as the result of a continuous evolutionary process. His total personality bears the imprint of the social and cultural society surrounding him.	Truth may be found through science (critical thinking and empiricism) and philosophy.	Values are derived and steadily improved from a philosophy of utilitarianism, ethical naturalism or evolutionary ethics.
Postmodernism More on worldview	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.

