

Chapter Three

A Philological History of “Worldview”

Word Studies on *Weltanschauung*

At the time of his Kerr Lectures in 1891, James Orr in *The Christian View of God and the World* could say of *Weltanschauung* that “the history of this term has yet to be written.”¹ Orr was surprised by the lack of attention given to this notion which had attained academic celebrity status in the second half of the nineteenth century. As he observed, “Within the last two or three decades the word has become exceedingly common in all kinds of books dealing with the higher questions of religion and philosophy — so much so as to have become in a manner indispensable.”² Though it was one of the favorite terms of the day, much to the dismay of Orr and others, its philological history for the most part was unexplored territory.

This is no longer the case, at least not among German-speaking scholars who have devoted themselves to the taxing disciplines of *Wortgeschichte* (history of words) and *Begriffsgeschichte* (history of concepts or ideas).³ Much energy has been devoted to the historical investigation of the German lexicon, and this effort has provided a gold mine of information about the background and usage of crucial terms and concepts in the natural and social sciences, humani-

1. James Orr, *The Christian View of God and the World as Centering in the Incarnation* (New York: Scribner, 1887), reprinted as *The Christian View of God and the World*, with a foreword by Vernon C. Grounds (Grand Rapids: Kregel, 1989), p. 365. Despite his complaint, Orr does cite several works in German that address the history of *Weltanschauung*.

2. Orr, *The Christian View of God and the World*, p. 365.

3. Arthur O. Lovejoy has championed the study of the history of ideas as a legitimate academic discipline in the Anglo-American context. For its essential features, see chap. 1 in his *The Great Chain of Being: A Study of the History of an Idea* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1964); and his *Essays in the History of Ideas* (New York: George Braziller, 1955).

WORLDVIEW

ties, philosophy and theology. When *Weltanschauung* had reached its zenith in popularity in both common and academic discourse around the turn of the twentieth century, it finally began to receive noteworthy attention. That attention has continued right up to the present time.

At least seven influential studies by German scholars detailing the history of *Weltanschauung* are worthy of mention. In chronological order, one of the first studies on *Weltanschauung* is found in the context of Albert Gombert's remarks on the discipline of *Wortgeschichte* (1902 and 1907).⁴ Much more prominent is the frequently cited "Euphorion-Artikel" written by Alfred Götze in 1924. This essay became the basis for a succinct examination of the term by Franz Dornseiff in 1945-46, and for the lengthy analysis of the concept in 1955 in the magisterial German Dictionary (*Deutsches Wörterbuch*), which originated with the Brothers Grimm.⁵

167
X
A most notable doctoral dissertation titled "Worldview: Studies toward a History and Theory of the Concept" was written by Helmut G. Meier and appeared in 1967.⁶ This work is perhaps the most exhaustive treatment of the history and theory of the concept of *Weltanschauung* in German available to date. Meier begins with an examination of the theoretical problems associated with the discipline of the history of ideas (*Begriffsgeschichte*). He then proceeds to survey the current status of word history studies as they pertain to *Weltanschauung*. He not only analyzes each of the word history resources cited above, but also explores articles on *Weltanschauung* in dictionaries of philosophy in German and in various foreign languages, including English. Next is an in-depth look at the use of *Weltanschauung* in the context of German idealism and romanticism focusing on the use of the notion by Kant, Fichte, Schelling, and Hegel, among others. He then investigates the scope of the term's application by various thinkers halfway through the nineteenth century. After considering worldview as an individual and subjective outlook, Meier then discusses the relationship of *Weltanschauung* and ideology in an excursus. He proceeds to sur-

4. Albert Gombert, "Besprechungen von R. M. Meyer's 'Vierhundert Schlagworte,'" *Zeitschrift für deutsche Wortforschung* 3 (1902): 144-58; "Kleine Bemerkungen zur Wortgeschichte," *Zeitschrift für deutsche Wortforschung* 8 (1907): 121-40.

5. Alfred Götze, "Weltanschauung," *Euphorion: Zeitschrift für Literatur-geschichte* 25 (1924): 42-51; Franz Dornseiff, "Weltanschauung. Kurzgefasste Wortgeschichte," *Die Wandlung: Eine Monatsschrift* 1 (1945-46): 1086-88; *Deutsches Wörterbuch von Jacob Grimm und Wilhelm Grimm*, Vierzehnter Band, 1 Teil, Bearbeitet von Alfred Götze und der Arbeitsstelle des Deutschen Wörterbuches zu Berlin (Leipzig: Verlag von S. Hirzel, 1955), pp. 1530-38. The latter work also contains helpful studies of *Weltanschauulich*, *Weltanschauunglehre*, *Weltanschauungsweise*, *Weltansicht*, and *Weltbild*.

6. Helmut G. Meier, "'Weltanschauung': Studien zu einer Geschichte und Theorie des Begriffs" (Ph.D. diss., Westfälischen Wilhelms-Universität zu Münster, 1967).

A Philological History of "Worldview"

vey its use in the disciplines of philosophy and religion. His final chapter is an inquiry into the structure and function of "Weltanschauung-Philosophie," with attention given to Riehl, Gomperz, Rickert, Husserl, Dilthey, and Jaspers. This work — given its depth of analysis, its extensive notes, and its lengthy bibliography — makes an invaluable contribution to *Weltanschauung* studies.

A "guidebook" on worldviews was also published in German in 1980 which contains the very helpful essay by Werner Betz titled "Toward a History of the Word 'Weltanschauung.'" In this survey the author covers much of the ground contained in the works mentioned above. In addition to the word study, this volume also examines the use of the worldview concept in political theory as well as in esoteric religion and life reform. At the end of the work is an extensive bibliography of over thirty pages compiled by Armin Mohler which demonstrates "the flood of worldview literature" in a variety of helpful categories.⁸

Finally and most recently, Andreas Meier published an article in 1997 in which he traces the birth of the term *Weltanschauung* to the nineteenth century. As the discussion to follow will indicate, however, the term was actually coined in the late eighteenth century, but certainly came into prominence in Germany and throughout Europe during the nineteenth century, as this article indicates.⁹

To these primary German works documenting the word history of *Weltanschauung* must be added two sources in English, both by the same author. Albert M. Wolters has written a very helpful unpublished manuscript titled "'Weltanschauung' in the History of Ideas: Preliminary Notes."¹⁰ In tracing the origin of the word and intellectual history of *Weltanschauung*, Wolters draws heavily on Götze, Dornseiff, Kainz, and the *German Dictionary (Deutsches Wörterbuch)*, and focuses especially on the relationship between personal worldview and scientific philosophy.

This theme of the interface between philosophy as an academic enterprise and worldview as a personal value system is the subject of Wolters's published essay titled "On the Idea of Worldview and Its Relation to Philosophy."¹¹ On the basis

7. Werner Betz, "Zur Geschichte des Wortes 'Weltanschauung,'" in *Kursbuch der Weltanschauungen*, Schriften der Carl Friedrich von Siemens Stiftung (Frankfurt: Verlag Ullstein, 1980), pp. 18-28.

8. Armin Mohler, "Bibliographie," in *Kursbuch der Weltanschauungen*, pp. 401-33.

9. Andreas Meier, "Die Geburt der 'Weltanschauung' im 19. Jahrhundert," *Theologische Rundschau* 62 (1997): 414-20.

10. Albert M. Wolters, "'Weltanschauung' in the History of Ideas: Preliminary Notes" (n.d., photocopy).

11. Albert M. Wolters, "On the Idea of Worldview and Its Relation to Philosophy," in *Stained Glass: Worldviews and Social Science*, ed. Paul A. Marshall, Sander Griffioen, and Richard J. Mouw, Christian Studies Today (Lanham, Md.: University Press of America, 1989), pp. 14-25.

WORLDVIEW

of various understandings of *Weltanschauung* by a number of German thinkers, Wolters devises a taxonomy of the “worldview-philosophy” relationship in which the former either “repels,” “crowns,” “flanks,” “yields,” or “equals” the latter.¹² How to relate individual worldview and professional philosophy has been of historic concern, and Wolters’s model, along with his investigation into the history of the term, provides helpful points of departure for reflection on these important topics. However, outside of his work, very little if any attention has been given by English-speaking scholars to the history of *Weltanschauung* as an intellectual conception. Hopefully, this present work will be a step toward rectifying this omission.

The First Use of *Weltanschauung* in Immanuel Kant

In the dynamic “century of Goethe,” says Hans-Georg Gadamer, a variety of “key concepts and words which we still use acquired their special stamp,” *Weltanschauung* included.¹³ During this culturally fertile period, Immanuel Kant was a towering figure, and there is virtually universal recognition that this notable Prussian philosopher coined the term *Weltanschauung* in his work *Critique of Judgment* published in 1790.¹⁴ It comes in a quintessential Kantian paragraph that accents the power of the perception of the human mind.

If the human mind is nonetheless to be able even to think the given infinite without contradiction, it must have within itself a power that is supersensible, whose idea of the noumenon cannot be intuited but can yet be regarded as the substrate underlying what is mere appearance, namely, our

12. Wolters, “Idea of Worldview,” pp. 16-17.

13. Hans-Georg Gadamer, *Truth and Method*, 2nd rev. ed., translation revised by Joel Weinsheimer and Donald G. Marshall (New York: Continuum, 1993), p. 9. In addition to “worldview,” he highlights such notions as art, history, the creative, experience, genius, external world, interiority, expression, style, and symbol as central to that enduring era.

14. For example, Betz, p. 18, notes that “The word *Weltanschauung* appears first in 1790 in Kant in his *Critique of Judgment*.” The *Deutsches Wörterbuch*, col. 1530, notes very simply that *Weltanschauung* is “first in Kant.” Helmut Meier, p. 71, asserts that “The creator of the word *Weltanschauung* is I. Kant.” M. Honecker, in his article in *Lexikon für Theologie und Kirche* (1938), s.v. “*Weltanschauung*,” agrees with this assessment, though he adds, importantly, that *Weltanschauung* no longer retains Kant’s original meaning: “Up to now, the word has first of all been directed to Kant (*Critique of Judgment*, 1790, part one, book two, section 26), though not with the meaning it has today.” However, Gadamer, p. 98, makes the interesting comment that *Weltanschauung* “first appears in Hegel in the *Phenomenology of Mind* as a term for Kant’s and Fichte’s postulatory amplification of the basic moral experience into a moral world order.” Yet, the fact that Kant’s use of the term in 1790 predates Hegel’s in 1807 by seventeen years would obviously falsify Gadamer’s assertion.

The Cosmos
& Earth & Man

A Philological History of "Worldview"

"intuition of the world" [*Weltanschauung*]. For only by means of this power and its idea do we, in a pure intellectual estimation of magnitude, comprehend the infinite in the world of sense *entirely under a concept*, even though in a mathematical estimation of magnitude *by means of numerical concepts we can never think it in its entirety*.¹⁵

Various phrases in the context of this quotation, such as "mere appearance" and the "world of sense," suggest that for Kant the word *Weltanschauung* means simply the sense perception of the world. Wolters, for example, believes there is nothing remarkable about this first use of *Weltanschauung* in the above quote, "since it is an incidental coinage by Kant, comparable to such existing compounds as *Weltbeschauung* [world examination or inspection], *Weltbetrachtung* [world consideration or contemplation] and *Weltansicht* [world view or opinion] and moreover refers simply to an *Anschauung* of the world in the regular sense of sense perception."¹⁶ This is Martin Heidegger's understanding of Kant's use of the term as well. He notes that Kant (as well as Goethe and Alexander von Humboldt) employed *Weltanschauung* in reference to the *mundus sensibilis*; that is, to refer to a "world-intuition in the sense of contemplation of the world given to the senses."¹⁷ From its coinage in Kant, who apparently used the term only once and for whom it was of minor significance, it evolved rather quickly to refer to an intellectual conception of the universe from the perspective of a human knower. Kant's Copernican revolution in philosophy, with its emphasis on the knowing and willing self as the cognitive and moral center of the universe, created the conceptual space in which the notion of worldview could flourish. The term was adopted by Kant's successors and soon became well ensconced as a celebrated concept in German and European intellectual life.

The Use of *Weltanschauung* in German and Other European Languages

The term prospered in the decades following its origination, especially under the influence of a number of key thinkers mostly in the German idealist and ro-

15. Immanuel Kant, *Critique of Judgment: Including the First Introduction*, translated and introduction by Werner S. Pluhar, with a foreword by Mary J. Gregor (Indianapolis: Hackett, 1987), pp. 111-12, emphasis Kant's.

16. Wolters, "Weltanschauung," p. 1.

17. Martin Heidegger, *The Basic Problems of Phenomenology*, translation, introduction, and lexicon by Albert Hofstadter, *Studies in Phenomenology and Existential Philosophy* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1982), p. 4.

WORLDVIEW

✓ Kant
↳ Fichte
Fichte
mantic traditions. First of all, Kant's progressive disciple, Johann Gottlieb Fichte (1762-1814), adopted the term immediately.¹⁸ His initial use of *Weltanschauung* came in his very first book, *An Attempt at a Critique of All Revelation* (1792), which was published only two years after the word had originally appeared in Kant's Critique of Judgment (1790). In this work Fichte adopts Kant's basic meaning of the term as the perception of the sensible world. In one place he refers to the principle of a "higher legislation" that harmonizes the tensions between moral freedom and natural causality, and serves as a way of perceiving the empirical world. "If we were able to take its principle as a basis for a world view [einer Welt Anschauung] then according to this principle one and the same effect would be cognized as fully necessary — an effect which appears to us in relation to the world of sense as free according to the moral law, and when attributed to the causality of reason, appears in nature as contingent."¹⁹

CLASSIC Fichte
Fichte continues by suggesting that God is the basis for the union of both the moral and natural domains, and that their actual unity is foundational to the "worldview" of the divine. Consequently, God perceives no fundamental distinctions in the nature of things. "In him, therefore, is the union of both legislations, and that principle on which they mutually depend underlies his "world view [Welt Anschauung]. For him, therefore, nothing is natural and nothing is supernatural, nothing is necessary and nothing is contingent, nothing is possible and nothing actual."²⁰

to Schelling
changed
Schelling
With this new term in his academic arsenal, Fichte moved in 1794 from Königsberg to Jena, and by 1799 it had been taken up by his younger colleague Friedrich Wilhelm Joseph von Schelling (1775-1854). As Martin Heidegger points out, however, the meaning of the word changes in Schelling, who gave it its commonplace meaning as "a self-realized, productive as well as conscious way of apprehending and interpreting the universe of beings".²¹ This makes good sense in light of Schelling's understanding of the purpose of philosophy. In his work titled *Philosophical Letters* (1795), he asserts that "the chief business of all philosophy consists in solving the problem of the existence of the world."²² For

18. For a discussion of Fichte's doctrine of worldviews, see Hartmut Traub, "Vollendung der Lebensform: Fichte's Lehre vom seligen Leben als Theorie der Weltanschauung und des Lebensgefühls," *Fichte-Studien* 8 (1995): 161-91.

19. Johann Gottlieb Fichte, *Attempt at a Critique of All Revelation*, translated and introduction by Garrett Green (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1978), p. 119, emphasis added.

20. Fichte, p. 120, emphasis added.

21. Heidegger, p. 4.

22. Friedrich Schelling, *Werke*, ed. M. Schröter, vol. 1 (Munich, 1927-28), p. 237, quoted in Frederick Copleston, S.J., *A History of Philosophy*, vol. 7, *Modern Philosophy from the Post-*

A Philological History of "Worldview"

Schelling, especially in the last phase of his career, this required an answer to the existential question that Heidegger took and developed as the theme of his *Being and Time*: "Just he, man, impelled me to the final desperate question: Why is there anything at all? Why not nothing?"²³ Worldviews themselves, if only tacitly, are a response to the problem of the existence (and) meaning of the world, and at least sketch a subliminal answer to the ultimate question of existence. This seems to be the sense implied in Schelling's *On the Concept of Speculative Metaphysics*, written in 1799, where he discusses two options for the intellect: "The intelligence is of two kinds, either blind and unconscious or free and with productive consciousness; productive unconsciousness in a worldview, with consciousness in the creation of an ideal world."²⁴ Thus a *Weltanschauung* is the product of the unconscious intellect. It refers to subterranean impressions about the world conceived by an anesthetized yet functioning mind. On the other hand, the intellect that has produced an "ideal world" is fully aware of its operations and content. Thus, from its birth in Kant to its use by Schelling, the term's primary meaning shifted from the sensory to the intellectual perception of the cosmos.

From these early beginnings, *Weltanschauung* took deep root and branched out, especially among a number of prominent intellectuals such as Friedrich Schleiermacher (1799), A. W. Schlegel (1800), Novalis (1801), Jean Paul (1804), G. W. F. Hegel (1806), Joseph Görres (1807), Johann Wolfgang von Goethe (1815), and others.²⁵ Though German theologians, poets, and philosophers primarily made use of the term during the first two decades of the nineteenth century, by the century's midpoint it had infiltrated a number of other disciplines, including the work of the historian Ranke, the musician Wagner, the theologian Feuerbach, and the physicist Alexander von Humboldt. Alexander's brother, Wilhelm von Humboldt — the German philosopher of language — also used the word in 1836 to argue that language gives expression to a particular worldview: "The variety among languages," he argued, "is not that of sounds and signs, but a variety of world-views themselves."²⁶ Thus, throughout the nineteenth century, *Weltanschauung* became enormously popular, and by the 1890s Orr could say it had become "in a manner indispensable."²⁷ It is no

Kantian Idealists to Marx, Kierkegaard, and Nietzsche (New York: Doubleday, Image Books, 1994), p. 100.

23. *The Encyclopedia of Philosophy* (1967), s.v. "Schelling, Friedrich Wilhelm Joseph von."

24. Quoted in Helmut Meier, p. 327 n. 147 (translation mine).

25. Wolters, "Weltanschauung," p. 1. See also Betz, pp. 19-25, and Helmut Meier, pp. 78-107, for further discussion of the early use of *Weltanschauung* by these German thinkers.

26. Wolters, "Weltanschauung," pp. 1-2. Von Humboldt's quotation is from *Handbook of Metaphysics and Ontology* (1991), s.v. "grammar-history."

27. Orr, *The Christian View of God and the World*, p. 365.

WORLDVIEW

wonder that Orr himself, as well as Abraham Kuyper, capitalized on its notoriety as a convenient and potent expression to configure their respective visions of a comprehensive Calvinist worldview. As Wolters points out, in its notable role among thinking Germans, *Weltanschauung* stood alongside “philosophy” as a companion concept. “In the course of the nineteenth century, then, the word becomes part of the standard vocabulary of the educated German. It comes to stand alongside the term ‘philosophy,’ which, in the words of K. Kuypers, now ‘receives as its most closely related neighbor, with an identity that is hard to classify, the term worldview, especially in German usage.’”²⁸

At the opening of the twentieth century, the reputation of *Weltanschauung* reached a climax. Countless books and articles employed the word in their titles. For example, Meier’s dissertation bibliography contains some 2,000 German works with *Weltanschauung* in the title, many of which bear an early twentieth-century copyright date.²⁹ Moreover, the adjective *weltanschauungliche* was coined in 1911, and this neologism prompted a quest among philologists to discover the origin of *Weltanschauung* itself, leading ultimately to the discovery of its coinage by Kant. Evidently in the idealist and romanticist environment of nineteenth-century Germany, *Weltanschauung* was a felicitous term, even a core concept (*Herzwort*), as Kainz called it,³⁰ one that expressed keenly the human aspiration to comprehend the nature of the universe. To the extent, then, that it struck a vital chord of human interest, *Weltanschauung* was apparently “an idea whose time had come.”³¹

Weltanschauung captured the imaginations not only of the German intelligentsia, but of thinkers throughout Europe and beyond. The term’s linguistic success is seen by how readily it was adopted by writers in other European languages either as a loanword, especially in the Romance languages, or as a calque (or copy word) in the idiom of Slavic and Germanic languages. Among the Germanic family of languages, Danish and Norwegian have *verdensanskuelse* as its equivalent, a term Wolters thinks may have been minted by Søren Kierkegaard. He used it along with *livsanskuelse* as his equally creative Danish coinage for the German *Lebensanschauung* (life view).³² Betz, however, traces *verdensanskuelse* back to the Danish poet and philosopher Paul Møller in 1837.³³ Swedish has developed *världsåskådning*, Icelandic uses *heimsskodun*, and Dutch has employed the compound *wereldaanschouwing* or *wereldbeschouwing*, from

28. Wolters, “Weltanschauung,” p. 3.

29. Helmut Meier, pp. 368-90.

30. Wolters, “Weltanschauung,” p. 2.

31. Wolters, “Weltanschauung,” p. 4.

32. Wolters, “Weltanschauung,” p. 5.

33. Betz, p. 25.

A Philological History of "Worldview"

which are derived both the Afrikaans *wêreldbeskouing* and the Frisian *wrâldskoging*.³⁴ In Slavic languages, Polish utilizes the word *swiatopoglad* and the Russian equivalent is *mirovozzrenie*, which was rendered formerly as "world outlook" in official Soviet translations.³⁵

In the Romance languages *Weltanschauung* has made its way as a loanword into a number of philosophical dictionaries in French and Italian. In the Italian *Enciclopedia Filosofica* (1958), L. Giusso notes the difficulty in translating it accurately, but offers this definition nonetheless: "The term, difficult to translate in Italian, signifies a vision, intuition or (more appropriately) a conception of the world."³⁶ The French *Dictionnaire Alfabétique et Analogique de la Langue Française* (1994) cites *Weltanschauung* as a loanword and attributes its first appearance in French to Jean Grenier in 1930. Designated as a philosophical term, it is defined as "A metaphysical view of the world regarding a conception of life."³⁷ Several citations of *Weltanschauung* in French philosophical dictionaries are also notable. A. Cuvillier, in the *Nouveau Vocabulaire Philosophique* (1956), suggests that it "designates a conception of the universe and of life." R. Jolivet, in his *Vocabulaire de la Philosophie* (1957), translates it as a "vision of the world," "a general view of the world," "a comprehensive point of view on the world," and a "practical attitude regarding the world." P. Foulquié, in the *Dictionnaire de la langue philosophique* (1962), argues that *Weltanschauung* should be translated as "an intuitive view of the world," and defines the concept as "a whole collection of metaphysical theses regarding the conception which everyone has of life." R. Vancourt, in the same dictionary, suggests that *Weltanschauung* has to do with the "com-

34. Wolters, "Weltanschauung," p. 28 n. 26. Wolters also makes a correction regarding the Dutch equivalent for *Weltanschauung* as it appears in both Götze and the *Deutsches Wörterbuch* (which error is also carried over into Betz as well). He notes that the normal Dutch equivalent for *Weltanschauung* is not *wereldaanshouwing* (which was a nineteenth-century Germanism that never gained currency in Dutch), but rather *wereldbeschouwing*. Wolters also points out that this latter Dutch term actually antedates Kant's coinage of *Weltanschauung* by about seventy-five years. *Wereldbeschouwing* occurs in the title of Bernard Nieuwentijdt's book *Het regt gebruik der wereltbeschouwingen*, published in Amsterdam in 1715. He notes, nonetheless, that the Dutch word *wereldbeschouwing* gained its present meaning and stature under the influence of the German *Weltanschauung*.

35. Wolters, "Weltanschauung," p. 28 n. 28a, p. 33 n. 118. For an interesting discussion of worldview or *mirovozzrenie* from a Marxist point of view, see *Great Soviet Encyclopedia*, 3rd ed. (1977), s.v. "world view." Not surprisingly, the article states: "The material conditions of a particular society, its material being, give rise to its specific world view."

36. *Enciclopedia Filosofica* (1958), s.v. "Weltanschauung" (translation mine).

37. *Dictionnaire Alfabétique et Analogique de la Langue Française*, 2nd ed. (1994), s.v. "Weltanschauung" (translation mine).

WORLDVIEW

prehesive reaction of an individual to the universe, from the point of view of intelligence, affection, and action."³⁸

From this brief survey, it seems clear that worldview was indeed an idea with legs, migrating throughout Europe, where it found lodging in a variety of linguistic and cultural contexts. Given the term's increasing prominence, it was impossible for it to remain isolated on the Continent for long. Soon it crossed the channel to Great Britain and was exported across the Atlantic to the United States. Hence we must investigate its fortunes in the Anglo-American context as well.

Weltanschauung and "Worldview" in the English-Speaking World

Weltanschauung has been received both as a loanword and as a calque or copy word in the English language. The *Oxford English Dictionary* (1989) has an independent entry for *Weltanschauung* as a loanword which, it notes, is derived from the German *Welt*, for "world," and *Anschauung*, for "perception."³⁹ The *OED* defines the term as "a particular philosophy or view of life; a concept of the world held by an individual or a group," and suggests it be rendered in English as "world-view." According to the textual apparatus, *Weltanschauung* first appeared in an English context in 1868 in a letter written by William James and quoted by R. B. Perry in his book *The Thought and Character of William James* (1935): "I remember your saying . . . that the characteristic of the Greek '*Weltanschauung*' was its optimism." Other documentations of the English usage of *Weltanschauung* are carried up through 1978. Of particular interest is the 1934 citation in M. Bodkin's *Archetypal Patterns in Poetry*; she wrote that "a man's philosophy . . . is his *Weltanschauung* — the individual vision, or perspective of reality."

The *OED* treats "world-view" very briefly as a calque or copy word.⁴⁰ It is listed in the twenty-sixth subheading under the discussion of "world," where it is shown to be the English equivalent of *Weltanschauung*. Here "world-view" is defined succinctly as "contemplation of the world, view of life." The textual apparatus indicates it was first used in English in 1858 by J. Martineau in his book *Studies of Christianity*, where he refers to "The deep penetration of his [Saint

38. These citations of French philosophical dictionaries are from Helmut Meier, p. 60 (translations mine; assisted by Jim Nelson Black). Wolters, "Weltanschauung," p. 27 n. 24, presents additional references to French philosophical dictionaries and encyclopedias where *Weltanschauung* is defined and discussed.

39. *The Oxford English Dictionary*, 2nd ed. (1989), s.v. "Weltanschauung."

40. *The Oxford English Dictionary*, 2nd ed. (1989), s.v. "world."

A Philological History of "Worldview"

Paul's] mistaken world-view." A second citation dates from 1906 in D. S. Cairns's *Christianity in the Modern World*, where he states that "Christianity, alike in its Central Gospel, and in its World-view, must come to terms with Hellenism."

Thus, within sixty-eight years of its inaugural use in Immanuel Kant's *Critique of Judgment*, *Weltanschauung* entered the English language in its naturalized form as "world-view." Ten years later the German word itself gained currency in Anglo-American academic discourse. Since their middle nineteenth-century beginnings, both *Weltanschauung* and "world-view" have flourished and become significant terms in the thought and vocabulary of thinking people in the English-speaking world.⁴¹

What is surprising, however, in light of the virtual omnipresence of *Weltanschauung* and "worldview," is how little attention has been paid to it in English encyclopedias and dictionaries of philosophy. By comparison, there is more in-depth discussion about *Weltanschauung* in social science and theological reference literature than there is in philosophy.⁴² For example, there is no independent entry for either *Weltanschauung* or "worldview" in the *Encyclopedia of Philosophy* (1967), though there are brief discussions of the notion scattered throughout its eight volumes.⁴³ The recent *Cambridge Dictionary of Philosophy* (1995) has no specific entry for "worldview," and under *Weltanschauung* refers the reader to the article on Wilhelm Dilthey where the notion is mentioned only very briefly.⁴⁴ The *Oxford Dictionary of Philosophy* (1994) is scarcely more complete with its brief definition of *Weltanschauung* as "a general world view; an overarching philosophy."⁴⁵ The *Oxford Companion to Philosophy* (1995) adds

41. The question has arisen regarding the proper formation of the Anglicized equivalent of *Weltanschauung*. Should it be formed as a single term ("worldview") or written as two separate words ("world view"), and if as two separate words, should it employ a hyphen ("world-view")? Though the *OED* employs the hyphenated form "world-view," and though the hyphen is common in many compound words, "for some years now, the trend in spelling compound words has been away from the use of hyphens" (*The Chicago Manual of Style*, 14th ed. [Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1993], 6.38). Since this is the case, "world-view" should perhaps be dropped in favor of the single compound or two separate, nonhyphenated words. Since *Weltanschauung* itself is an amalgam in the original German (*Welt* + *Anschauung*), for the sake of accuracy in reproduction the term will be formed as a single compound English word throughout this work. The expression, nonetheless, is found frequently in both versions, and indeed, perhaps more often as two separate words.

42. For reasonably substantial articles, see *International Encyclopedia of the Social Sciences* (1968), s.v. "world view," and *Sacramentum Mundi: An Encyclopedia of Theology* (1970), s.v. "world, views of the."

43. See these articles in the *Encyclopedia of Philosophy* (1967): s.v. "political philosophy, nature of"; s.v. "Schiller, Friedrich"; s.v. "Dilthey, Wilhelm"; s.v. "Mauthner, Fritz."

44. *The Cambridge Dictionary of Philosophy* (1995), s.v. "Dilthey, Wilhelm."

45. *The Oxford Dictionary of Philosophy* (1994), s.v. "Weltanschauung."

WORLDVIEW

little with its succinct definition and brief bibliography. Antony Flew's *A Dictionary of Philosophy* (1979) pays scant attention to the concept, defining it as "any general view of the Universe and man's relationship to it." He does make this important point, however, about its relationship to philosophy proper: "Usually the term is applied to a philosophy affecting the practical (as opposed to purely theoretical) attitudes and beliefs of its adherents."⁴⁶ Finally, and perhaps most surprisingly, the recent *Routledge Encyclopedia of Philosophy* (1998), despite its otherwise commendable thoroughness, offers no discussion of "worldview" or *Weltanschauung* as a concept. It merely references several examples of worldviews (e.g., Cartesian, ecological, Newtonian), and cites related concepts such as "historical consciousness" and the importance of language in worldview formation. *Weltanschauung* receives only one negligible mention.⁴⁷

From the rather sparse attention given to *Weltanschauung* in these reference works, we could easily draw the conclusion that in Anglo-American philosophical discourse, this notion is a relatively minor one (perhaps it is, in comparison with its Continental usage). Nonetheless, the frequent use of the term by numerous thinkers across the disciplines seems incongruent with its neglect by English-speaking philosophers. This dearth of attention, however, does not diminish the role or significance that *Weltanschauung* and "worldview" have played in an Anglo-American context. Few transplanted European notions have enjoyed as much success as *Weltanschauung*, as a first cousin to "philosophy," in aptly capturing the intrinsic human aspiration to formulate a worthy view of life.

Conclusion

Since its inception in Immanuel Kant's *Critique of Judgment* in 1790, the notion of *Weltanschauung* has become one of the central intellectual conceptions in contemporary thought and culture. Though the history of the term has for the most part been neglected in the English-speaking world, scholars in the prodigious German enterprises of word history and the history of ideas have thoroughly investigated its background. Notable works by Alfred Götze and Werner Betz (among others) as well as the entry in the *German Dictionary (Deutsches Wörterbuch)*, plus the comprehensive dissertation by Helmut G. Meier, have admirably charted the term's pilgrimage. Though this fascinating notion has its

46. *A Dictionary of Philosophy*, 2nd ed. (1979), s.v. "Weltanschauung."

47. See the index in vol. 10 of the *Routledge Encyclopedia of Philosophy* (1998), s.v. "worldview" and "Weltanschauung."

A Philological History of "Worldview"

roots sunk deeply in German soil, its rapid transcontinental transplantation manifests the amazing fertility of the concept. A penetrating idea that felicitously expressed core human concerns had been born. No wonder, then, that within seven decades of its birth it entered Anglo-American discourse and became as fruitful across the channel and overseas as it had been on the European continent. Given its success, what is surprising is the lack of reflection devoted to the history and theory of the notion among English-speaking philosophers and scholars. A history of the concept in nineteenth- and twentieth-century philosophy and among the disciplines of the natural and social sciences should help to rectify this situation.

Chapter Four

A Philosophical History of "Worldview": The Nineteenth Century

There is more to *Weltanschauung* than its linguistic past. For an even greater degree of elucidation, especially in light of its prominent role in Christian thought, we must backtrack a bit and pick up on the role of "worldview" in the history of European philosophy in the nineteenth century. Therefore, in this chapter we will hit the highlights by focusing on the role of this conception in the thought of G. W. F. Hegel, Søren Kierkegaard, Wilhelm Dilthey, and Friedrich Nietzsche.

"Worldview" in G. W. F. Hegel

The Post French Revolution
quest for an
"Alternative
Theory of Right"
to Natural Law

In an intense and extensive development, "the German mind during the short span of four decades (1780-1820) produced a wealth of systems of philosophical *Weltanschauung* . . . such as has at no other time been compressed with so narrow a space."¹ The thought and work of Georg Wilhelm Friedrich Hegel (1770-1831) certainly crowns this remarkable period of amazing intellectual achievement. Though his college diploma noted his inadequate grasp of philosophy, the fact is that Hegel "presented mankind with one of the most grandiose and impressive pictures of the Universe which are to be met with in the history of philosophy."² Not only does he employ the concept of *Weltanschauung* in interesting ways, but the substance of his system makes it possible to credit him not

1. Wilhelm Windelband, *A History of Philosophy*, ed. and trans. James H. Tufts, 2nd ed. (New York: Macmillan, 1901), p. 529.

2. Frederick Copleston, S.J., *A History of Philosophy*, vol. 7, *Modern Philosophy from the Post-Kantian Idealists to Marx, Kierkegaard, and Nietzsche* (New York: Doubleday, Image Books, 1994), p. 162.

"A Fundamental Critique of Natural Law:
An Alternative Theory of Right"
68

A Philosophical History of "Worldview": The Nineteenth Century

only with the notion of the Absolute Spirit, but also with "the discovery of alternative conceptual frameworks"³

Early on Hegel showed an interest in the term *Weltanschauung*.⁴ During the inaugural year of his professorship at Jena in 1801, he published his first work, titled *The Difference between Fichte's and Schelling's System of Philosophy*. This book contains his initial use of the word in a section concerned with the "relation of philosophizing to a philosophical system." In a dialectical movement, reason joins together the objective and subjective antitheses to form an infinite and substantive worldview. Hegel writes: "Reason then unites this objective totality with the opposite subjective totality to form the infinite world-intuition [*unendlichen Weltanschauung*], whose expansion has at the same time contracted into the richest and simplest identity."⁵ From the beginning of his career, *Weltanschauung* served as Hegel's term of choice to convey an important idea within the framework of dialectical thought.

Hegel's use of "worldview" in the *Phenomenology of Mind* is more significant. This work, published in 1807, presents the essential parameters of his philosophical system. Its subject matter is the biography of the consciousness of the Geist or Spirit. In Kant's analysis of consciousness, there is one set of determining categories for all rational minds, making a single basic view of the world possible. For Hegel in the *Phenomenology*, however, there are a variety of forms of consciousness such that Jacob Loewenberg could describe the book as a treatment of "different and recurrent views of life: (1) sensuous and intellectual, (2) emotional and reflective, (3) practical and theoretical, (4) mystic and philistine, (5) sceptical and dogmatic, empirical and speculative, conservative and radical, selfish and social, religious and secular."⁶ Hegel, in systematic fashion, examines these various conscious outlooks, one of which is called "the moral view of the world," the content of which he describes in these terms: *It generates a specific mode of Ethical Reasoning*

Starting with a specific character of this sort, there is formed and established a moral outlook on the world [*moralische Weltanschauung*] which

3 Robert C. Solomon, *Continental Philosophy Since 1750: The Rise and Fall of the Self*, A History of Western Philosophy, vol. 7 (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1988), p. 59.

4. Helmut Reinicke cites some thirty-six notable uses of *Weltanschauung* in Hegel's collected works in the index to Georg Wilhelm Friedrich Hegel, *Werke*, vol. 21 (Frankfurt: Suhrkamp Verlag, 1979), p. 725. For a lengthy study of Hegel's use of *Weltanschauung*, see Helmut G. Meier, "Weltanschauung: Studien zu einer Geschichte und Theorie des Begriffs" (Ph.D. diss., Westfälischen Wilhelms-Universität zu Münster, 1967), pp. 112-40.

5. G. W. F. Hegel, *The Difference between Fichte's and Schelling's System of Philosophy*, trans. H. S. Harris and Walter Cerf (Albany: State University of New York Press, 1977), p. 114.

6. Jacob Loewenberg, ed., introduction to *Hegel: Selections* (New York: Scribner, 1929), p. xviii.

WORLDVIEW

¹⁵ consists in a process of relating the implicit aspect of morality and the explicit aspect. This relation presupposes both thorough reciprocal indifference and specific independence as between nature and moral purposes and activity; and also, on the other side, a conscious sense of duty as the sole essential fact, and of nature as entirely devoid of independence and essential significance of its own. The moral view of the world [*Die moralische Weltanschauung*], the moral attitude, consists in the development of the moments which are found present in this relation of such entirely antithetic and conflicting presuppositions.⁷

Gadamer suggests that Hegel uses *Weltanschauung* here "as a term for Kant's and Fichte's postulatory amplification of the basic moral experience [transmuted] into a moral world order."⁸ It carries the force of a practical perspective on life, a conscious attitude that is permeated with the tension of moral concern and obligation. It was one of the many viewpoints that Hegel examines in this work, not as if they were formal philosophical systems, but rather as "ways of living and of looking at the universe."⁹ Hegel's phenomenology entails the discrete recognition of a diversity of world models as the Absolute Spirit instantiated itself in human thought and culture on its dialectical journey through history toward eschatological self-understanding. Along the historical way, however, alternative theories of life are developed, contrasted, and synthesized. The notion of *Weltanschauung* as the cognitive offspring of the Absolute Spirit in the historical process was well suited to convey this aspect of his philosophy.

In his *Philosophy of History* Hegel suggests that worldviews are embedded in both the individual and national consciousness. Regarding the individual, each person may have a characteristic worldview as well as an idiosyncratic religious perspective. He states "that as everyone may have his particular way of viewing things generally [*Weltanschauung*], so he may have also a religion peculiar to himself."¹⁰ Later in the book Hegel employs the term to refer to the outlook of an entire nation. After presenting a forthright interpretation of the Hindu deity (as one "degraded to vulgarity and senselessness"), he then com-

7. G. W. F. Hegel, *The Phenomenology of Mind*, translated with introduction and notes by J. B. Baillie, 2nd ed. (London: George Allen and Unwin, 1961), pp. 615-16. For additional references to the notion of a "moral worldview," see also pp. 625 and 644.

8. Hans-Georg Gadamer, *Truth and Method*, 2nd rev. ed., translation revised by Joel Weinsheimer and Donald G. Marshall (New York: Continuum, 1993), p. 98.

9. Jean Hyppolite, *Genesis and Structure of Hegel's Phenomenology of Spirit*, trans. Samuel Cherniak and John Heckman, Northwestern University Studies in Phenomenology and Existential Philosophy (Evanston, Ill.: Northwestern University Press, 1974), pp. 469-70.

10. G. W. F. Hegel, *The Philosophy of History*, trans. J. Sibree, in *The Great Books of the Western World*, vol. 46 (Chicago: Encyclopaedia Britannica, 1952), p. 193.

A Philosophical History of "Worldview": The Nineteenth Century

ments that such a theology "gives us a general idea of the Indian view of the Universe [*indischen Weltanschauung*]." ¹¹ Again we see that *Weltanschauung* is an apt term referring to various styles of thought about the nature of existence, shared in common nationally or ethnically, and is influential on the *intellectus* of the particular individual. As Vincent McCarthy states, "For Hegel, *Weltanschauung* means the world-view of a certain nation, in a certain time: a shared view in which the poet participates. Thus a world-view is a general, shared view which one acquires automatically by participation in the times and society which one forms with one's fellows. . . . World-view, à la Hegel, is the understanding from apprehending the unfolding of Spirit in the exterior world."¹²

?

Does not explain different worldviews of brothers

The relationship of *Weltanschauung* to philosophy and religion is on Hegel's mind in his *Lectures on the Philosophy of Religion*. After arguing that religion is intrinsic to human nature, he then poses a question about the relation of religion to worldview and suggests that philosophy is responsible to explain the nature of the connection. "As man, religion is essential to him, and is not a feeling foreign to his nature. Yet the essential question is the relation of religion to his general theory of the universe [*Weltanschauung*], and it is with this that philosophical knowledge connects itself, and upon which it essentially works."¹³

But first the relationship between philosophy and worldview must be clarified. As the context indicates, "forms of consciousness" and "the principles of the time," worldviews "are not to be confused with philosophy per se. Yet, because of the ongoing contact, strife, and antagonism between them, their relation will have to be clarified as well. Philosophy as the chief discipline must elucidate its own nature, explain its connection with worldview, and articulate the relationship between worldviews and religion. Once this order of things is clear, then the discipline of the philosophy of religion is freed to proceed properly on its own terms. Hegel, therefore, draws concrete distinctions and explains the connection between these fundamental areas of human interest and concern, worldview among them."

NO!

not clear. See PUTTERS Box

NOT one is derivative of the other

While there are a few rather benign references to *Weltanschauung* in Hegel's *Lectures on the History of Philosophy*,¹⁴ the word does yeoman's duty in

11. Hegel, *The Philosophy of History*, p. 221.

12. Vincent A. McCarthy, *The Phenomenology of Moods in Kierkegaard* (Boston: Martinus Nijhoff, 1978), p. 136.

13. Georg Wilhelm Friedrich Hegel, *Lectures on the Philosophy of Religion Together with a Work on the Proofs of the Existence of God*, trans. Rev. E. B. Speirs and J. Burdon Sanderson, vol. 1 (New York: Humanities Press, 1962), p. 6.

14. See Georg Wilhelm Friedrich Hegel, *Lectures on the History of Philosophy*, trans. E. S. Haldane and Frances H. Simson, 3 vols. (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1995), 1:37-38; 3:25, 166, 507.

WORLDVIEW

his lectures on aesthetics.¹⁵ Francis Schaeffer has said that an “artist makes a body of work and this body of work shows his world view.”¹⁶ This is the gist of Hegel’s view as well. For example, he speaks of the development of the course of Spirit manifested concurrently in both a *Weltanschauung* and in the art which expresses it. He writes: “This development is itself a spiritual and universal one, since the sequence of definite conceptions of the world [*Weltanschauungen*], as the definite but comprehensive consciousness of nature, man, and God, gives itself artistic shape.”¹⁷ This suggests that in different historical epochs, a worldview and its expression in art will be different: “the art expressive of one world-view differs from that which expresses another: Greek art as a whole differs from Christian art as a whole. The sequence of different religions gives rise to a sequence of different art-forms.”¹⁸ Art is indeed called upon to represent “the inner essence of the content” of a given period. Hegel, at the outset of his treatment of romantic art, is constrained to clarify the contours of the romantic mind-set which “comes into consciousness in the shape of a new vision of the world [*neuen Weltanschauung*] and a new artistic form.”¹⁹ Thus for Hegel, the calling of art is to exhibit the spirit of the age. Ways of viewing the world are woven into art and revealed by it.²⁰

As a worldview incarnate, art is manifested especially in epic and lyric poetry as well as in the dramatist or singer of lyrics. Regarding the epic genre, Hegel says: “Consequently the content and form of epic proper is the entire world-outlook [*gesamte Weltanschauung*] and objective manifestation of a national spirit presented in its self-objectifying shape as an actual event.” Again regarding epic, Hegel asserts: “Thus viewed, the rounding off and the finished shape of the epic lies not only in the particular content of the specific action but just as much in the entirety of the world-view [*Totalität der Weltanschauung*], the objective realization of which the epic undertakes to describe.” What is true of epic is also true of lyric verse. Hegel writes: “General views, the fundamental basis of an outlook on life [*einer Weltanschauung*], deeper conceptions of the decisive relations of life are therefore not excluded from lyric, and a great part of the subject matter . . . is equally within the province of this new specie of po-

15. G. W. F. Hegel, *Aesthetics: Lectures on Fine Art*, trans. T. M. Knox, 2 vols. (Oxford: At the Clarendon Press, 1975). Gadamer, p. 98, has noted the importance of *Weltanschauung* in Hegel’s “admirable lectures on aesthetics.”

16. Francis A. Schaeffer, *Art and the Bible*, L’Abri Pamphlets (Downers Grove, Ill.: InterVarsity, 1973), p. 37.

17. Hegel, *Aesthetics*, 1:72.

18. Hegel, *Aesthetics*, 1:72 n. 1.

19. Hegel, *Aesthetics*, 1:517.

20. Hegel, *Aesthetics*, 1:517, 603, 604; 2:613.

etry." Finally, Hegel notes that whereas the epic and lyric poets are the conduits of a larger, collective vision of reality, "the singer of lyrics expresses his own heart and his personal outlook on life [*subjektive Weltanschauung*]." ²¹ Thus, whether individually through the dramatist or collectively through the lyricist or writer of epic, poetry as well as other art forms are expressions of world-views, as these are instantiations of Spirit in a variety of historical moments and movements.

The notion of *Weltanschauung* is certainly on display in the writings of G. W. F. Hegel. Though he did not give sustained attention to a theory of worldview as such — a task that was eventually undertaken by Wilhelm Dilthey — nonetheless his frequent use of the term and his international prominence surely imparted to the idea an importance that it might not have enjoyed otherwise. For him worldviews are the phenomena of the Absolute Spirit in the dialectic of history. Anthropologically, they become the moods, perceptions, attitudes, and states of human consciousness as frameworks of reality. Richard Rorty is correct, therefore, when he states that "The notion of alternative conceptual frameworks has been a commonplace of our culture since Hegel." ²² They are to be distinguished from philosophy and religion, and are held individually and corporately by the body politic. Worldviews sustain an important relationship to art, which serves often as the medium by which various views of life are manifested and promoted. Because of Hegel's philosophy and use of *Weltanschauung*, we can justly say, along with Michael Ermarth, that "much of German intellectual history of the modern period may be said to center upon the properties and perplexities of the notion of world-view." ²³ Thus, Hegel played a significant role in the promotion of *Weltanschauung* as an incisive concept in the nineteenth-century European intellectual scene.

Not at all clear that this is true see "Stack" of Beliefs that make up a worldview

"Worldview" and "Lifeview" in Søren Kierkegaard

As I discussed earlier, the popular notion of *Weltanschauung* spread rapidly among Continental thinkers and migrated far from its intellectual birthplace in Germany, even making its way rather quickly to the Scandinavian region. Though the specifics are uncertain, by 1838 Søren Kierkegaard (1813-55) had heard and embraced the term, coined its Danish counterpart, and employed it

21. Hegel, *Aesthetics*, 2:3044, 1090, 1114, 1179.

22. Richard Rorty, "The World Well Lost," in *Consequences of Pragmatism: Essays 1972-1980* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1982), p. 3.

23. Michael Ermarth, *Wilhelm Dilthey: The Critique of Historical Reason* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1978), p. 323.

WORLDVIEW

in his first published work. Throughout his career “worldview” and its companion term, “lifeview,” played a crucial role in his philosophic reflections and personal life. As McCarthy observes, the latter notion in particular penetrates to the depth dimension of Kierkegaard’s existential thought.

Worldview

Life-view emphasizes the duty and importance of the individual to understand himself, both his “premises” and his “conclusions,” his conditionality and his freedom. Each man must answer for himself about the meaning of life, and thus he cannot take his cue from the spirit of the age which will all too readily answer on his behalf. In addition, life-view, as philosophy of life, challenges established, academic philosophy which proceeds exclusively from thought. The new philosophy which Kierkegaard suggests by his emphasis on life-view and his definition of it is no longer detached thought but reflection upon the meaning of experience and then its articulation in a coherent view. Life-view is not to be the sole aspect of new philosophizing, but will instead properly take its place at the center of the search for wisdom, which “philosophy once claimed to be.”²⁴

Given the importance of both “worldview” and “lifeview” for Kierkegaard, some technical information about his invention and use of these terms is in order. Kierkegaard’s Danish copy word for *Weltanschauung* is *verdensanskuelse*, which occurs only five times in his collected works, according to the basic concordance to Kierkegaard’s complete works.²⁵ The more important term for Kierkegaard is *livsanskuelse*, which is his equivalent of the German *Lebensanschauung*, and is translated in English as “lifeview.” Kierkegaard’s remarkable

24. McCarthy, pp. 136–37. This author, who is deeply enamored with Kierkegaard’s use of “lifeview,” points out how “references to the importance of a life-view, its nature and its function in existence, are numerous in Kierkegaard’s authorship” (p. 136; see also pp. 133, 155). Other contemporary Kierkegaardologists recognize the pivotal role of the world and lifeview conception in the body of his writings. Wolters, “‘Weltanschauung’ in the History of Ideas: Preliminary Notes” (n.d.), photocopy, p. 5, says: “It is a central category in his thought.” Michael Strawser, *Both/And: Reading Kierkegaard from Irony to Edification* (New York: Fordham University Press, 1997), p. 20, also asserts that lifeview is “an idea of great importance . . . in Kierkegaard’s writings taken as a whole.” Josiah Thompson, *The Lonely Labyrinth: Kierkegaard’s Pseudonymous Works*, foreword by George Kimball Plochmann (Carbondale: Southern Illinois University Press, 1967), p. 71, believes that Kierkegaard’s recognition of alternative lifeviews and the ability to move freely between them is, if not “the core,” then at least “a fundamental theme” in his later authorship.

25. *Fundamental Polyglot Konkordans til Kierkegaards Samlede Værker* (Leiden: E. J. Brill, 1971), s.v. “verdensanskuelse.” *The Index Verborum til Kierkegaards Samlede Værker* (Leiden: E. J. Brill, 1973), s.v. “verdensanskuelse,” p. 1250, cites three more uses of the word plus an additional variant not cited in the *Konkordans*.

A Philosophical History of "Worldview": The Nineteenth Century

143 usages of this latter term is over twice the number of times the word "philosophy" appears in his collected works.²⁶ Having thus been minted by Kierkegaard, *livsanskuelse* and *verdensanskuelse* made their Danish debut in Kierkegaard's 1838 publication titled *From the Papers of One Still Living*.²⁷ Unquestionably, he preferred *livsanskuelse* (lifeview) over *verdensanskuelse* (worldview), since it best captured the existential character of his philosophy, though on a few occasions he uses the terms synonymously.²⁸ As one for whom the purpose of life was to find a truth for which one could live and die²⁹ (Kierkegaard's so-called Gilleleje Entry), it seems that he was searching for nothing other than a *livsanskuelse*, a deep and satisfying view of life that would enable him to become a total human self. Kierkegaard's understanding of this rich concept and his contribution to the history of worldview will be seen as we examine some selected passages in his authorship dealing with the subject.

Kierkegaard's forty-page *From the Papers of One Still Living* (1838), aptly described by one commentator as an "overgrown newspaper article,"³⁰ is replete with reflections on "lifeview" (*livsanskuelse*). It is a scathing review of Hans Christian Andersen's third novel, titled *Only a Fiddler* (1837). According to Kierkegaard, a lifeview is the *conditio sine qua non* for a novel in both positive and negative ways. He explains its supreme function as a literary ballast in these words: "A life-view is really providence in the novel; it is its deeper unity, which makes the novel have a center of gravity in itself. A life-view frees it from being arbitrary or purposeless, since the purpose is immanently present everywhere in the work of art. But when such a life-view is lacking, the novel either seeks to insinuate some theory (dogmatic, doctrinaire short novels) at the expense of

26. *Fundamental Polyglot Konkordans til Kierkegaards Samlede Værker*, s.v. "livsanskuelse." The *Index Verborum til Kierkegaards Samlede Værker*, s.v. "livs-anskuelse," p. 668, notes that the *Konkordans* cites 143 references of *livsanskuelse*, and lists an additional 28 previously uncited variations of the word as well.

27. Danish linguistic authorities have apparently failed to note this earliest use of *livsanskuelse* and *verdensanskuelse* in the Kierkegaard authorship. As Wolters points out, p. 28 nn. 33 and 34, the great Danish lexical source — *Ordbog over det Danske Sprog* — indicates that the first uses of *livsanskuelse* and *verdensanskuelse* are after 1838, and that *livsanskuelse* is still considered a new compound as late as 1868, despite Kierkegaard's earlier coinage of the word.

28. See Kierkegaard's *On Authority and Revelation*, translated with an introduction and notes by Walter Lowrie, introduction to the Torchbook edition by Frederick Sontag (New York: Harper and Row, Harper Torchbooks, Cloister Library, 1966): "And after all a world-view, a life-view, is the only true condition of every literary production" (p. 4); "For he has a definite world-view and life-view . . ." (p. 7).

29. *The Journals of Kierkegaard, 1834-1854*, trans. and ed. Alexander Dru (London: Oxford University Press, 1938), pp. 15-16.

30. McCarthy, p. 140.

WORLDVIEW

poetry or it makes a finite or incidental contract with the author's flesh and blood."³¹

Unfortunately, a lifeview is exactly what Andersen's novel lacked. In pointing out his deficiency, Kierkegaard describes the nature of a lifeview and mentions two possible alternatives, Stoicism and Christianity.

Now when we say that Andersen altogether lacks a life-view (*livsanskuelse*), then that utterance is as much founded on the foregoing as that it itself provides the foundation for the latter. A lifeview is more than a pure idea or a sum of propositions held fast in abstract neutrality; it is more than experience which as such is always atomistic, it is namely the transubstantiation of experience, it is an unshakable certainty in oneself which has been won by all [of one's] experience — either it has become familiar with all worldly relations (a mere human standpoint, e.g., Stoicism) which by doing this keeps itself out of contact with a deeper experience — or in its direction toward heaven (the religious), it has found therein what is crucial, both for its heavenly and its earthly existence, has won the true assurance "that neither death, nor life, nor angels, nor Principalities, nor Powers, nor the present, nor the future, nor the heights, nor the depths nor anything of any sort shall be able to separate us from God's love in Christ Jesus our Lord."³²

Two things are notable about this quotation. First is the rejection of intellectualist and experientialist definitions of lifeview in favor of the rather striking description of it as a "transubstantiation of experience." A lifeview, though not to be identified with simple experience, is nevertheless achieved through experience leading to personal transfiguration and self-certainty. Secondly, this unruffled assurance and transformed state can be of two kinds, one worldly and humanistic as exemplified in Stoicism, and the other deeper and heavenly as instantiated in Christianity. What is significant is how Kierkegaard, who clearly defends the latter alternative over the former, designates both Stoicism and Christianity as lifeview options.

In this same context Kierkegaard points out that not everyone obtains a lifeview, either because of the interference of life itself or because of an unreflective preoccupation with suffering. Assuming these obstacles are overcome, however, Kierkegaard describes the basics of lifeview formation: "If now we ask how a life-view comes about, then we reply that for him who does not permit his life to fizzle out, but who tries insofar as possible to balance the individual events in life — that for him there must necessarily come a moment of unusual

31. Quoted in Strawser, p. 21.

32. Compiled from Wolters, pp. 6-7, and McCarthy, p. 145.

illumination about life, without his needing in any way to have understood all the possible particulars to the subsequent understanding of which he has in the meantime [come to have] the key: I say, there must come the moment when as Daub observes, life is understood backwards through the Idea."³³

Here a lifeview is described as an "unusual illumination about life" which is granted at a kairos moment in one's experience. It consists not in an understanding of everything but rather supplies the key (i.e., a framework or outline) by which all things can indeed be understood. Though life moves ahead into the future, it is only understood backwards, and the possession of lifeview — the Idea — is the means to private and public enlightenment.

Thus, in Kierkegaard's first published work, he introduces the motif of lifeview. Though it is primarily a work of literary criticism, as McCarthy notes, his concern was also "with a mature, serious life-view not merely for the purpose of epic poetry but for the grasp of what is crucial for both heavenly and earthly existence."³⁴

In Kierkegaard's two-volume work *Either/Or* (1843), two stages of existence, the aesthetic and the ethical, square off in pugilist fashion. In one corner is Johannes Climacus, or A, the incorrigible aesthete whose points of view are expressed in part 1 of the work. In the other corner is Judge William, or B, the representative of the ethical outlook, whose critiques of A are presented in the second part of the treatise. At its core *Either/Or* is a contest between two lifeview alternatives: between living aesthetically or ethically. As the editor/referee of these two respective volumes, Victor Eremita, points out, "A's papers contain a multiplicity of approaches to an esthetic view of life. . . . B's papers contain an ethical view of life."³⁵ Out of the drama of this agonistic relationship between A and B, there emerge valuable Kierkegaardian insights about "lifeview" abstractly, and "lifeviews" concretely.

At the abstract level, Judge William proclaims to Johannes Climacus that a lifeview is not only a "natural need" but is also something absolutely "essential." Like Climacus, the person who lives aesthetically has a lifeview, though he may not recognize or understand it because of his immersion in the immediacy of experience. To offset his dim-wittedness, William informs Climacus that "every human being, no matter how slightly gifted he is, however subordinate his position in life may be, has a natural need to formulate a life-view, a conception of the meaning of life and its purpose." Though an arrogant Climacus may wish to distinguish him-

33. Quoted in McCarthy, p. 144.

34. McCarthy, p. 146.

35. Søren Kierkegaard, *Either/Or*, edited and translated with introduction and notes by Howard V. Hong and Edna H. Hong, 2 vols. (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1987), 1:13.

WORLDVIEW

self from lesser aesthetes who seem to be unable to enjoy life as he does, William informs him that he has “something in common with them, and something very essential — namely, a life-view,” and that what in fact does distinguish him from them is something entirely unessential.³⁶ A lifeview, therefore, is bound up with crucial hermeneutic and teleological questions. This search is both natural and necessary for human beings. Lifeview and human existence are inseparable.

Furthermore, William affirms that positive answers to these lifeview queries, when combined with the ingredient of the ethical, form the basis for stable human friendships. “The absolute condition for friendship,” William plainly states, “is unity in a life-view.” Such a foundation for friendship has distinct advantages. “If a person has that, he will not be tempted to base his friendship on obscure feelings or on indefinable sympathies. As a consequence, he will not experience those ridiculous shifts, so that one day he has a friend and the next day he does not.” Furthermore, William declares, though many people possess a philosophical “system,” in their formal ratiocinations the ethical component is conspicuously absent. Conversely, “the ethical element in the life-view becomes the essential point of departure for friendship, and not until friendship is looked at in this way does it gain meaning and beauty.” Hence, William concludes, “Unity in a life-view is the constituting element in friendship.”³⁷

Kierkegaard points out elsewhere that a lifeview is not only foundational for friendship, but is also a prerequisite for parenthood and an essential component of the Christian education of children. Regarding the former matter, a child has as much right to learn of the meaning of life from his father as he does to expect milk from his mother. The possession and impartation of a lifeview is as intrinsic to the calling of fatherhood as breast-feeding is to motherhood.

Do you not think that to be a father requires that you have reached the maturity of really having a view of life which you dare vouch for and dare commend to your child when, with the right it has in being a child and in owing you its life, it asks you about the meaning of life? Or supposing that what nature takes care of, breast milk, etc. happened to be the woman’s special task to attend to — would it not be loathsome to want to be a mother, to satisfy one’s desires, but not to have in readiness what the child needs? But from the father a child has the right to demand a view of life, that the father really has a view of life.³⁸

36. Kierkegaard, *Either/Or*, 2:179-80.

37. Kierkegaard, *Either/Or*, 2:319-21.

38. Søren Kierkegaard, *Journals and Papers*, vol. 3, L-R, ed. and trans. Howard V. Hong and Edna H. Hong, assisted by Gregor Malantschuk (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1975), p. 140.

Friendship and parenthood are bound up in this matter of a lifeview. So is education. In his *Attack upon "Christendom,"* Kierkegaard bemoans the fact that in nominally Christian homes children suffer from the failure of parents to impart to them a distinctively Christian education, including a lifeview. "The education of children," he complains, "consists in formal training, in learning a few things, but one does not undertake to convey any religious and still less any Christian view of life, to talk to the child about God, still less to speak of Him in accordance with the concepts and ideas which are peculiar to Christianity."³⁹ For Kierkegaard, by implication, the impartation of a concept of life steeped in Christian thought was an indispensable educational requirement in families making a claim to the faith.

Either/Or also focuses on a number of concrete lifeviews that fall under the broad headings of the aesthetic and the ethical. In their sparring with one another, Judge William informs Johannes Climacus that the latter's aesthetic outlook boils down to a single proposition: one must enjoy life. Some lifeviews, in which the condition for the enjoyment of life lies *inside* the individual, focus on health, beauty, or talent.⁴⁰ Other lifeviews, in which the condition for enjoying life lies *outside* the individual, concentrate on wealth, honor, noble birth, romantic love, and so on.⁴¹ Additionally, William seeks to persuade Climacus that the relentless pursuit of pleasure terminates ultimately in despair, sadness, or sorrow.⁴² William's ultimate goal, therefore, is to convince Climacus that his own lifeview is bankrupt, and that a significant shift of paradigms from the aesthetic to the ethical is in order. "All the same, you have no life-view. You have something that resembles a view, and this gives your life a kind of composure that must not, however, be confused with a secure and revitalizing confidence in life. You have composure only by contrast with the person who is still pursuing the phantoms of enjoyment."⁴³

Judge William's point is plain: there is no viable lifeview available under the category of the aesthetic. As Kierkegaard had chastised Andersen for his neglect of a lifeview in his novel, so Judge William reproaches Johannes Climacus for the same heinous omission in his own life. Only by a transition from the aesthetic to the ethical can he obtain a new viewpoint that would sustain him. The choice was his: *either* to live aesthetically *or* to live ethically.

The ethical sphere of existence, however, is only penultimate to the final

39. Søren Kierkegaard, *Attack upon "Christendom,"* translated, introduction, and notes by Walter Lowrie, new introduction by Howard A. Johnson (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1968), p. 223.

40. Kierkegaard, *Either/Or*, 2:181.

41. Kierkegaard, *Either/Or*, 2:182-83.

42. Kierkegaard, *Either/Or*, 2:190, 195, 204, 232, 235.

43. Kierkegaard, *Either/Or*, 2:202.

WORLDVIEW

Kierkegaard

stage of the religious. In *Stages on Life's Way* (1845),⁴⁴ a crisis in lifeview is detected in which a transition is made from the aesthetic domain all the way to the religious. The story unfolds in Quidam's diary, "Guilty?/Not Guilty?" — one of the "studies by various persons" in Kierkegaard's *Stages*. The occasion is a broken relationship. In the midst of his contemplation about the basic categories of his life, Quidam realizes that his lifeview must be renovated, and in "a moment of unusual illumination" he knew that its fundamental premise must be religious. In listening to the preacher he gains enlightenment: "The next point is that each person prepares the way of the Lord within himself. This, of course, is what ought to be spoken about, and on this point a life-view can be built." The resolution to the collapse of the aesthetic, for Quidam, as for all, is in the religious stage of existence. This thesis is also presented in another essay in *Stages* entitled "Reflections on Marriage," where "a married man" states: "The resolution is a religious view of life constructed upon ethical presuppositions, a view of life that is supposed to pave the way, so to speak, for falling in love and to secure it against any external and internal danger."⁴⁵ The religious does not replace the previous spheres of existence, but absorbs and redeems them all. Thus, in the stages along life's way, the religious lifeview is final and all-inclusive.

The contribution of *Concluding Unscientific Postscript* (1846) to Kierkegaard's theory of lifeview is relatively minor, with one exception. It has to do with an assertion of Johannes Climacus which associates lifeview with "the Greek principle," and it implicitly raises the perennial question: What is philosophy? "To understand oneself in existence was the Greek principle. However little content the doctrine of a Greek philosopher sometimes represented, the philosopher had nevertheless one advantage: he was never comical. I am well aware that if someone were nowadays to live like a Greek philosopher, existentially expressing and existentially probing the depths of what he must call his view of life, he would be regarded as a lunatic. Let it be so."⁴⁶

The Greek principle, and its lifeview analogue, is the very antithesis of abstract thought. "While abstract thought seeks to understand the concrete abstractly, the subjective [lifeview] thinker has conversely to understand the abstract concretely."⁴⁷ The best in early Greek philosophy — exemplified for

44. Søren Kierkegaard, *Stages on Life's Way: Studies by Various Persons*, edited and translated with introduction and notes by Howard V. Hong and Edna H. Hong (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1988).

45. Kierkegaard, *Stages on Life's Way*, p. 162.

46. Søren Kierkegaard, *Concluding Unscientific Postscript*, trans. David F. Swenson, completed after his death with introduction and notes by Walter Lowrie (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1941), p. 315.

47. Kierkegaard, *Concluding Unscientific Postscript*, p. 315.

Kierkegaard in the historical, pre-Platonic Socrates — pursued “the ‘love of wisdom’ in an authentic human existence grounded in reflection and the desire to understand oneself.”⁴⁸ This is precisely the burden of lifeview philosophy as well. However, just as the existentially oriented Greek philosophy had been eclipsed by the abstractions of Platonic idealism in Socrates’ day, so lifeview philosophy had been thwarted by Hegelian idealism in Climacus’s day. Because academic philosophy — Platonic, Hegelian, or otherwise — was so disengaged from the pathos of human existence, it had become “comic” or silly. Greek and lifeview philosophy, however, because of its profound existential encounter with the stuff of human existence, was never comic or silly, though professional philosophers or abstract thinkers in the ancient or contemporary periods may scoff at it. In Climacus’s day, to live and think like a Greek philosopher in probing and searching out a lifeview would be considered madness, sheer lunacy. What was Climacus’s response to such ridicule? “Let it be so.” What, then, is true philosophy? Climacus suggests that true philosophy is found in the “Greek principle” of the classical world, and in the “lifeview philosophy” of his own day. The serious pursuit and development of a *livsanskuelse*, in short, is the true love of wisdom, and ought to replace the comedy of abstract thought.

Through these remarkable reflections, Søren Kierkegaard introduced the concept of both worldview and lifeview in Scandinavia.⁴⁹ Preferring the more existential orientation of lifeview over the more Hegelian and abstract notion of worldview, he employed the idea as a way of referring to alternative ways of being in the world (aesthetic, ethical, religious) and as a theme that penetrates to the meaning and purpose of life itself, whether in Christian or non-Christian terms. For Kierkegaard, a lifeview is essential to literature, friendship, parenthood, and education. The pursuit of a lifeview is at the heart of philosophy, a genuine love of wisdom that trumps the abstractions of professional thought. His reflections on this subject, however, were serendipitous, not systematic. Meanwhile, back on the Continent, a German philosopher by the name of Wilhelm Dilthey had recognized the importance of “worldview as a concept and made it a crucial component of his attempt to work out an epistemology of the

48. McCarthy, p. 139.

49. Another Danish philosopher by the name of Harald Høffding, who was deeply influenced by Kierkegaard, devoted a significant amount of energy to reflecting upon the meaning and implications of world and life view. Known primarily for his two-volume *History of Modern Philosophy* (1894-95), Høffding published a summary of his system in 1910 at the age of sixty-seven under the Danish title *Den Menneskelige Tanke* (Human thought). This work, which has been translated into German and French, devotes some forty pages to an analysis of worldview. Høffding’s theory of world and life view is also discussed in his *The Problems of Philosophy* (ET, 1905). For more on Høffding, see Wolters, pp. 9-10 nn. 41-50.

WORLDVIEW

human sciences. The richness of his thought and its historical significance demand that we discuss it in some detail.

“Worldview” in Wilhelm Dilthey

Wilhelm Dilthey (1833-1911), whom José Ortega y Gasset called “the most important philosopher in the second half of the nineteenth century,”⁵⁰ is best known for his theories of the human sciences (*Geisteswissenschaften*), his contributions to certain methodological problems in the study of history, and his creative advances in the discipline of hermeneutics. Not to be overlooked, however, is his pioneering, systematic treatment of worldviews. Like many others, Michael Ermarth has recognized the unique contribution of Dilthey’s reflections on worldview, and the importance of the concept in his philosophy.

It was Dilthey who raised the problem of the world-views to a comprehensive theoretical statement. In this area he pioneered and mapped intellectual terrain which was later to be explored by students in many different disciplines. His writings provide full scale treatment of the genesis, articulation, comparison, and development of the world-views. His doctrine or “science of the world-views” (*Weltanschauunglehre*; often *Wissenschaft der Weltanschauung*), which is frequently treated as a marginal dimension of this thought, is in reality one of its fundamental elements and requires careful analysis in its own right.⁵¹

Dilthey’s reflections on worldview were a part of his overall attempt to formulate an objective epistemology for the human sciences, just as Immanuel Kant had done for the natural sciences. Though he was supremely concerned about scientific truth and the possibility of objective historical and cultural knowledge, his thinking was nonetheless rooted in the issues of real life and what he called “lived experience.” “Every true world-view,” Dilthey argued, “is

50. José Ortega y Gasset, *Concord and Liberty*, trans. Helene Weyl (New York: Norton, 1946), p. 131. Ortega y Gasset concludes this work with “A Chapter from the History of Ideas — Wilhelm Dilthey and the Idea of Life” (pp. 129-82). Among other things in this final section, he discusses Dilthey’s theory of world visions (or worldview). Largely due to the work of Ortega y Gasset, Dilthey has become reasonably well known in the Spanish-speaking world. Evidence of this is found in a translation of Dilthey’s analysis of worldviews by Eugenio Ímaz. See his *Orbas de Wilhelm Dilthey: Teoria de la Conception Del Mundo* (Mexico and Buenos Aires: Fondo de Cultura Económica, 1945).

51. Ermarth, p. 324. This author also notes at the outset of his volume that “worldview” had “come into wide usage through Dilthey’s own work” (p. 15).

A Philosophical History of "Worldview": The Nineteenth Century

an intuition which emerges from the standing-in-the-middle-of-life."⁵² Life itself was an enigma requiring explication. Like trying to guess what a soul is like from a brief glimpse of a human face, so the cryptic countenance of life invites deeper investigation. Cosmic and personal questions are forever the preoccupation of thoughtful people who seek to understand life's secrets.

The riddle of existence faces all ages of mankind with the same mysterious countenance; we catch sight of its features, but we must guess at the soul behind it. This riddle is always bound up organically with that of the world itself and with the question what I am supposed to do in this world, why I am in it, and how my life in it will end. Where did I come from? Why do I exist? What will become of me? This is the most general question of all questions and the one that most concerns me. The answer to this question is sought in common by the poetic genius, the prophet and the thinker.⁵³

Human life is largely carried out in the interrogative mood. Questions about the origin, action, purpose, death, and especially the destiny of human beings in the world are the concern of poet, philosopher, and prophet alike. Hence Dilthey, sounding very much like an existentialist in the Kierkegaardian tradition, asserted that "to understand life as it is lived by man — that is the aim of man today."⁵⁴

This goal to understand life was in fact perpetual, according to Dilthey, and had expressed itself in the universal metaphysical impulse to ascertain the contours of reality in absolutist terms. The rise of historical consciousness had demonstrated that these universal metaphysical systems were in fact highly conditioned and relative, and a mere function of the historical particularities and dispositions of their authors. In the final analysis, metaphysical systems, as authoritative and grandiose as they may appear, were false. The history of metaphysics was in fact the history of philosophical failure. Any attempt at a future metaphysic would share in the same fate.⁵⁵

In place of traditional metaphysical systems that claimed universal valid-

52. Wilhelm Dilthey, *Gesammelte Schriften*, 8:99, quoted by Ilse N. Bulhof, *Wilhelm Dilthey: A Hermeneutic Approach to the Study of History and Culture*, Martinus Nijhoff Philosophy Library, vol. 2 (Boston: Martinus Nijhoff, 1980), p. 89.

53. Dilthey, *Gesammelte Schriften*, 8:208-9, quoted by Theodore Plantinga, *Historical Understanding in the Thought of Wilhelm Dilthey* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1980), pp. 81-82.

54. Dilthey, *Gesammelte Schriften*, 8:78, quoted by Ermath, p. 17.

55. On historicism and its relation to metaphysics in Dilthey's thought, see Plantinga, pp. 122-48.

WORLDVIEW

ity, Dilthey set forth his metaphilosophy of worldview. In it he proposed an analysis and comparison of basic attitudes toward life as these underlie and are expressed in poetry, religion, and metaphysics. He called this metaphilosophical enterprise a “philosophy of philosophy” (*Philosophie der Philosophie*) and a “doctrine” or “science” of worldviews (*Weltanschauungslehre*). This innovative philosophical task, this historical investigation of worldviews, would disclose how the human mind in the context of lived experience had sought to make sense out of the mystery of the cosmos. “It is the task of the theory of worldviews,” Dilthey stated, “by analyzing the historical course of religiosity, poetry, and metaphysics in opposition to relativity, systematically to present the relationship of the human mind to the riddle of the world and life.”⁵⁶ The investigation of worldviews historically, according to Dilthey, avoids the absolutist error of traditional metaphysics and yet renders insights, partial though they may be, into the nature of the cosmos as these have been garnered by the ever inquisitive human mind.

Dilthey’s theory of worldviews is perhaps best examined in the context of his program for the human sciences, and as it relates to his hermeneutic philosophy.⁵⁷ Nonetheless, it is intrinsically interesting and worthy of independent investigation. Dilthey’s reflections on worldview are found in three primary locations in his collected works.⁵⁸ The *locus classicus* is found in the eighth volume of his *Collected Writings*, which has been translated into English.⁵⁹ This material, which justifies labeling Dilthey the “father of worldview theory,” can be analyzed in four main sections.

56. Dilthey, *Gesammelte Schriften*, 5:406, quoted by Ramon J. Betanzos, trans., in his introduction to *Introduction to the Human Sciences: An Attempt to Lay a Foundation for the Study of Society and History*, by Wilhelm Dilthey (Detroit: Wayne State University Press, 1988), p. 29.

57. On the influence of Dilthey’s doctrine of worldviews on his hermeneutic philosophy, see Thomas J. Young, “The Hermeneutical Significance of Dilthey’s Theory of World-Views” (Ph.D. diss., Bryn Mawr College, 1985). See also Young’s abridgment of his dissertation in “The Hermeneutical Significance of Dilthey’s Theory of World Views,” *International Philosophical Quarterly* 23 (June 1983): 125-40.

58. Dilthey’s basic discussions of worldview may be found in the following locations in his *Collected Writings* (*Gesammelte Schriften*): (1) “The Essence of Philosophy” (5:378-416), (2) scattered references in vol. 7, and (3) the entirety of vol. 8.

59. Wilhelm Dilthey, *Dilthey’s Philosophy of Existence: Introduction to Weltanschauungslehre*, translated and introduction by William Kluback and Martin Weinbaum (New York: Bookman Associates, 1957), pp. 17-74. The same material is abridged in W. Dilthey, *Selected Writings*, edited, translated, and introduction by H. P. Rickman (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1976), pp. 133-54. The page numbers in the text are from the Bookman Associates edition.

On the Conflict of Systems

Alternative to post modernism

The "anarchy of philosophical systems" (p. 17), (according to Dilthey) is largely responsible for the persistence of skepticism. The historically proven fact of a multitude of mutually exclusive metaphysical systems, each claiming universal validity, produces a tension of almost unbearable proportions. The history of philosophy does nothing but exacerbate this tension. The contest among Greek interpretations of the universe, the conflict between Christians and Muslims, the debates between the followers of Averroes and Aristotle, the revival of Greek and Roman thought in the Renaissance, the age of the discovery of new climates and cultures, and the reports of international travelers all served to extinguish "man's confidence in his hitherto firmly set convictions." Despite the human compulsion to fashion theoretical systems to demonstrate "how things are interrelated," the fact of the matter is, according to Dilthey, "every single one of these systems excludes the other, each one refutes the other, [and] none can prove itself fully" (pp. 17-18). This history has instilled a cynical sense of "amused curiosity" regarding the advent of any new philosophical system: Who will believe it, and how long will it last?

Timothy

Even more destructive to traditional metaphysics than the recognition of the "anarchy of philosophical systems" was the implication "of the continuous unfolding of the historical awareness of man" (p. 19). Historicism has murdered metaphysics. The natural law tradition rooted in the perennial Western belief that there was "but one type of man, endowed with a particular nature," eventually fell victim to an all-encompassing doctrine of evolution as it was applied consistently to both biological and historical life. Dilthey observes that during the Enlightenment, "the old concept of the typical man was lost and transmuted into the process of evolution." When this theory of evolution was combined "with the recognition of the relativity of every historical form of life," the result was the destruction of "the belief in the absolute validity of any one philosophy which might have undertaken to interpret the world compellingly by an interrelation of concepts" (pp. 19-20). The powerful principle of historicism solved the problem of competing metaphysical models making a claim to universal validity: they were all the products of the fluctuating historical process. Hence, in Dilthey's estimation, metaphysics is dead. If any kind of worldview is to be achieved, the starting point for reflection must be in the light of history, on the basis of experience, and rooted in life itself. To satisfy the innate need for an understanding of human existence, Dilthey proposes his doctrine of worldviews in which he attempts to steer a middle course between a defunct metaphysical absolutism and the nihilism of historical relativism. (But what are worldviews in the first place, where do they come from, and how do they arise?

WORLDVIEW

Dilthey answers with his theoretical reflections on the nature of life itself and of worldviews.

Life and Worldview

If the meaning of life is to be grasped in the form of a worldview, then it must begin with the initial recognition that “the ultimate root of any world view is life itself.” This “life,” which Dilthey almost seems to divinize, is not the personal life of individuals, but life in its objective manifestation, life which everywhere possesses “identical traits and common features.” The particulars of daily experience — a bench, a tree, a house, a garden — are “meaningful only in this objectification” (pp. 21-22). The experience of this objectified life is the beginning point of a worldview. A life world, or *Lebenswelt*, begets a worldview, or *Weltanschauung*.

Despite the fact that life is experienced differently in each individual, the immutability of human existence guarantees that “the fundamental features of life’s experience [are] common to all men.” For example, the destiny and corruptibility of life plus the fact of death determine “the significance and meaning of life” for everyone. Given these boundaries, a series of patterns, traditions, and habits emerge at the communal level that provide a kind of epistemic certainty, though this certainty is markedly different from the kind obtained in science with its precise methods and principles. Still, a “fixed system of relations” and a “framework of life experiences” rooted in “empirical consciousness” establish the possible horizons of meaning. Worldview formation, then, partakes of the paradox of form and freedom. The liberty of interpretation is circumscribed by the limits of reality (pp. 22-23).

The more philosophically inclined, Dilthey argues, see life in all its conditions, contradictions, and changes as an “enigma.” The certainty of death, the cruelty of the natural process, a general transitoriness, plus a myriad of other factors have prompted a quest in minds past and present to penetrate these unfathomable mysteries. Worldviews, therefore, are an attempt to solve “the riddle of life” (pp. 23-24).

Out of the whirlwind of experience, human beings form attitudes toward life and the world by necessity, and eventually universal attitudes or moods are established. Though there will be some fluctuation in these attitudes at the behest of new experiences, nonetheless Dilthey believes that “in different individuals there prevail certain attitudes according to their own character” (p. 25). These various attitudes toward life — marked either by enjoyment, security, religiosity, futility, or otherwise — may be subsumed under the two larger head-

A Philosophical History of "Worldview": The Nineteenth Century

ings of optimism and pessimism. These great "moods of life" (*Lebensstimmung*), which shape and give substance to all worldviews, are finely nuanced as well. Attitudes toward the world and the dispositions of optimism or pessimism are an expression of a person's character, and this constitutes a basic law of worldview formation.

Worldviews are not only shaped by character, but also possess an "identical structure" that reflects "an inherent psychic order" in human beings. In short, "world views tend towards uniformities in which the structure of psychological life is expressed." Since there are three structural aspects to the human mind (mind, emotion, will), there are therefore three structural aspects to a worldview. First of all, according to Dilthey's analysis, it begins with the mind's formation of a "cosmic picture," or *Weltbild*, which is a product of the "immutable laws of the phases of cognition." A world picture is a depiction of what is, a set of concepts and judgments that adequately capture "the relatedness and true being of reality." Second, on the basis of the *Weltbild* and other unchangeable laws of psychic experience, there is the formation of the "effectual value" of life. Objects, people, and other phenomena are deemed worthy or unworthy depending on their perceived value. What is deemed useful is approved, and what is considered harmful is rejected. "Thus conditions, persons, and objects assume their importance in relation to the whole of reality, and this whole itself is stamped with meaningfulness." Third is the "upper level of consciousness" consisting of the highest ideals, the greatest good, and the supreme principles for the conduct of life which imbue a *Weltanschauung* with vitality and power. "At this stage the world view becomes creative, formative, and indeed reforming." The result is "a comprehensive life plan, a highest good, the highest norms of action, an ideal of shaping one's personal life as well as that of society" (pp. 25-27). Thus for Dilthey, the metaphysical, axiological, and moral structure of a worldview is derived from the constituents of the human psyche — intellect, emotion, and will respectively. Macrocosmic visions, in their composition and content, are intrinsically reflective of the inner constitution of microcosmic human beings as they seek to illuminate the darkness of their cosmos. (Good Try!)

Worldviews are not one but many. According to Dilthey, the multiplicity of worldviews can be explained by the simple fact that they are developed under radically different conditions by radically different kinds of people. Analogous to the vast array of animal species struggling for existence, so also "the world of man knows a growth of structures of world views and a struggle between them for power over the minds of men." This struggle, like all evolving things, is subject to the law of the survival of the fittest. Cogent, useful models of life and the world are preserved and perfected while others are eliminated.

Handwritten notes in the left margin:
II
Cosmic
#2
Telos
#3
WR on 6
Leads to
Moral
Ethical
Reasoning
Handwritten notes in the right margin:
Ah!
The
CHAKRAS
? ?
really
really
must
be
Telos
worthy
in relation
to
What
objective
True
BUT
leaves
out
of
the
system
of
gods

87
Missing The Real
underlying "Source"
of "worldviews" - "CHAKRAS"

WORLDVIEW

good try

Despite their rich diversity, worldviews retain a "structural uniformity" because of their grounding in the architecture of the human mind. Nonetheless, the varieties of cultures, the succession of historical epochs, the changes in the mind-sets of nations and individuals can be explained by the fact that "there is a permanent renewal of combinations of life experience, sentiments and ideas within a given world view, prevailing in a certain period of history and its context" (pp. 27-29). In other words, worldviews can fluctuate internally, adding and subtracting ideas, values, and actions consistently or inconsistently. Dilthey points out that when these alternative conceptual schemes are subject to comparative analysis, a typology of worldviews emerges. Only appropriate historical methods will suffice in ascertaining worldview types and their variations.

Sound enough. In 1866

Dilthey summarizes this aspect of his discussion in one main thesis. In brief, worldviews spring from the totality of human psychological existence: intellectually in the cognition of reality, affectively in the appraisal of life, and volitionally in the active performance of the will. In so exercising their native capacities over the centuries in a painstaking and arduous process, human beings have formulated their outlooks on life with one primary goal in mind: stability. The ultimate irony, however, is that "mankind has not made the slightest progress on this particular path." No winner has been declared in the contest between worldviews. Dilthey prognosticates that there never will be one, for the fact of the matter is that worldviews are "undemonstrable and indestructible" (pp. 29-30). They are largely the functions of faith, and are anchored in the dynamic, ever flowing waters of the river of life into which no one can ever step twice, or maybe even once. Out of the flux and dynamism of human experience, worldviews come to conscious expression religiously, poetically, and metaphysically.

Not True. ultimately BUT True Now!

FLYING over the Rockies in JET

THE WRONG categories

Religious, Poetic, and Metaphysical Worldviews

Religionists, poets, and metaphysicians are fortunately freed from the fetters of the economic, social, legal, and political machinery of life that distorts the world pictures of those who occupy these restricted spheres of existence. In the purer regions of freedom which these cultural architects inhabit, there originate and grow "world views of worth and power" (p. 31). Though conceived in freedom, worldviews obtain a religious, poetic, or metaphysical orientation, depending upon the cast of the minds that produced them.

The Religious Worldview

According to Dilthey, the powers of the unseen, invisible world and an attempt to placate and interact with such powers constitute the original religious forms of worship and establish the fundamental category of religious life. Through the efforts of a "particular religious genius," the various aspects of religious thought and experience are consolidated, and this "concentrated religious experience" inspires a codification of religious ideas. Against this background Dilthey offers this description of the religious worldview: "From such a relationship to the invisible, there emerge the interpretation of reality, the appraisal of life and the ideal of practical conduct. All of them are contained in parabolic speech and in doctrines of faith. They rest on a whole order of life. They develop in prayer and meditation. From the outset all these world views harbor in themselves a conflict of beneficent and evil beings, of an existence according to the understanding of our senses, and of a higher world transcending the senses" (p. 34).

He has the wrong "categories" the "religions" ^{beliefs}

Dilthey isolates three main types of religious worldviews focusing on ^{each}

? (1) "the immanence of universal reason," which suggests a kind of idealism; ^{Monism}

(2) "the spiritual All-One," which corresponds to pantheism; and (3) the "creative divine will," which has theistic implications. Dilthey points out that religious worldviews are harbingers of metaphysics, but they never blend or dissolve into this philosophical discipline. Nonetheless, he suggests that the Judeo-Christian teachings segued into the monotheistic idealism of freedom, that notions of the All-One anticipated the metaphysical pantheism of the Neoplatonists Bruno, Spinoza, and Schopenhauer, and that the original monotheism transitioned to the scholastic theology of Jewish, Arabian, and Christian thinkers, which in turn fostered the philosophies of Descartes, Wolf, and Kant (deism) and the reactionary thinkers of the nineteenth century (naturalism). The religious worldview always retains its distinctively spiritual traits which prevent its amalgamation into metaphysics, especially the traits of an unshakable epistemic confidence and a fixity upon the transcendent world. Dilthey notes that despite the fact that this otherworldly orientation was shown to be the historical product of "sacerdotal techniques" (p. 35), it nevertheless preserved strains of idealism and induced the discipline of a harsh asceticism. Thus the religious worldview, in Dilthey's estimation, was too morally rigorous and too personally restricting. The human spirit must be freed up to embrace life and the world more exuberantly. The poetic worldview is just such an example, for whereas religion is riveted on the celestial, art is deeply rooted in the terrestrial.

WORLDVIEW

The Poetic Worldview

While art in its early stages was developed under the auspices of religious life, gradually in the flow of history it achieved its liberation and “the ordered life of the artist obtained its full freedom” (p. 36). The very structure of worldviews spawned by art — the naturalistic, the heroic, and the pantheistic — manifests this freedom and independence, as the history of painting and music demonstrates.

Of all the arts, Dilthey maintains in a way similar to Hegel that poetry enjoys a unique relationship to all worldviews primarily because language is its medium. In either lyric, epic, or dramatic genres, poetry expresses and represents in words “all things seen, heard, or experienced” (p. 37). Poetry serves a variety of functions. It liberates people from the burden of reality; it opens up new worlds and vistas through flights of fancy; and most importantly, it gives expression to the universal moods of life (as these are expressed in works ranging from the book of Job to Hölderlin’s *Empedocles*). Poetry should never be confused with the scientific understanding of reality. Rather, poetry reveals the significance of people, events, and objects in the context of relationships, and thereby sheds light on the enigma of life. Paralleling the course of cultural development from initial creeds and habits to the daunting task of interpreting and clarifying life, poetic genres have been invented — from epic to drama to the novel — to enable a society to express itself appropriately in accordance with its stage of maturity.

Most important, however, is the fact that poetry originates in life (not in unseen realms, as religions do). Consequently, it reveals its view of life in its depiction of a certain event, thing, or person. Poetry, in other words, is the avenue of expression for poets and the poets’ various views of the world. “Life makes poetry always represent new aspects,” says Dilthey. “The writer shows the boundless opportunities of looking at life, of evaluating it, and of creatively shaping it anew” (p. 38).

What are some examples of these poetically portrayed views of life? According to Dilthey, the work of Stendhal and Balzac presents an interpretation of naturalism, the lines of Goethe set forth a version of vitalism, and the verses of Corneille and Schiller represent a moral outlook. Each order of life has its corresponding poetic genre, and thus each poetic genre conveys one of the great types of worldviews. Through their poetic content and genre, then, Balzac, Goethe, and Schiller, among others, must be credited with the lofty accomplishment of articulating an understanding of life (pp. 38-39).

In the final analysis, poetry — as the medium of a worldview — is a critical evangelistic conduit by which particular interpretations of reality are

spread throughout the whole of culture and promulgated among human beings. There is a progression, therefore, from religious to poetic to metaphysical worldviews.

The Metaphysical Worldview

Out of the resources of both poetry and religion, prompted by a desire for stability and at the demand of reason, metaphysics, also supported scientifically, makes its appearance. While religion lays the foundation and poetry provides expression, it is "the will to acquire a universally true knowledge which gives a unique structure to this new form of world view" (p. 40). Working within the context of a metaphysical viewpoint, philosophers in their ordained task devise and defend its propositions and apply them thoroughly to the most important aspects of human society. Any historical accretions associated with their systems of thought are judged to be purely accidental and are quickly removed. The goal, once again, is the establishment of "a single and demonstrable conceptual whole, by which one might eventually solve life's enigma in a methodical fashion" (p. 42). Still, the many deep differences between metaphysical systems are apparent, thereby generating an attempt at classification, the most basic of which is the division between idealism and realism.

At this point Dilthey returns to the concept which makes sense of these differences and undergirds his attempt at a science of worldviews: "it is the concept of historical consciousness." This key opens the door to understanding the lack of metaphysical progress and the conflict between metaphysical systems. Thus we come full circle as Dilthey writes that historicism "demonstrates how all metaphysical effort at conceptual mastery has not moved one inch toward the goal of a unified system. Only through historical consciousness can we grasp that the conflict of the metaphysical systems is deeply embedded, nay founded in life, in life's experience, and in actually assumed positions toward life's problems." Metaphysics is in no way the product of pure thought, but rather emerges out of the stickiness of life, and out of the personalities and perspectives of its creators. Indeed, the great metaphysicians, according to Dilthey, "have stamped the particular constitution of their own lives on systems of conceptions which claim to have universal validity. The typical element therein is identical with their character and is expressed in their particular order of life" (p. 44). Dilthey mentions Spinoza, Fichte, Epicurus, and Hegel as good examples of this point. Still, the plethora of metaphysical viewpoints, born out of the vagaries of history and human subjects, must be taxonomized. For Dilthey there is only one method adequate to the task: descriptive history and comparison. He explains why:

Kantian
condition
What
The Quest for
a "Schematic"

WORLDVIEW

If we want to arrive at a conception of types of world views, we must study history. The most important lesson we learn from history in this respect is that we comprehend how life and metaphysics are connected, that we penetrate life in order to reach the core of these systems, and that we become conscious of the interrelation of the great systems which show a typical attitude — without any regard to how we limit or classify them. The only thing that counts is that we learn to look deeper into life and to follow the great intentions of metaphysics. (p. 50)

Of course, Dilthey will need a hermeneutical standard by which the various interpretations of life may be compared and contrasted. Because of the historical relativity of any criterion subjectively selected and employed for this task, Dilthey makes the admission that his proposal "must remain quite provisional" (p. 50). Despite this liability, his undertaking provides a deeper insight into history and therefore into life itself. It leads to a threefold typology of worldviews.

Common need "Categories of Belief"

Arbitrary

Naturalism, the Idealism of Freedom, and Objective Idealism

Influenced by Goethe and others, and by the typological method fashionable around the turn of the twentieth century, Dilthey formulated his typology of worldviews in which he discerned three basic forms: naturalism, the idealism of freedom, and objective idealism. Several commentators note how this threefold typology indicates the dominance of either the body (naturalism), the mind (idealism of freedom), or the interpenetration of body and mind (objective idealism).⁶⁰ Each type represents not just a rational scheme but a total life attitude as organizing centers. Also, these types are coherent and stabilizing but not closed or static, since they vibrate by an inner dialectic that breeds revision. Consequently, Dilthey did not ossify these worldview types. He simply posited them as a means to elucidate history, as a kind of heuristic device, as provisional aids to inquiry, as a means of seeing deeper into life. All devices like this worldview typology must be perpetually open to new insights and reformulations. Nonetheless, from Dilthey's historical investigation, three Weltanschauung models emerged.⁶¹

wizard
Arbitrary

not Real

TRue

60. A very similar observation was made long ago by Augustine, *De doctrina Christiana*, in *The Works of St. Augustine — a Translation for the Twenty-first Century*, vol. 11 (Hyde Park, N.Y.: New City Press, 1996), p. 109 (§1.7).

61. An interesting comparison may be made between Dilthey's typology and the three "true reality values" identified and discussed by Pitirim Sorokin in his *The Crisis of Our Age: A*

Needs the CHARAS

A pedagogical device

very "Limited" - to 3 worldviews

A Philosophical History of "Worldview": The Nineteenth Century

Naturalism

1st Paradigm
Humanism - (over)

According to Dilthey, naturalism as a worldview is established upon the thesis that human beings are determined by nature. The experience of the natural world and the physical instincts of the human body are determinative for what the cosmos itself is like. Indeed, in this framework the aim in life is to provide for the needs of the body; all other features of human experience are subordinated to the overriding demand of sensate life. This overpowering physical experience is thereby attributed to the cosmos at large and forms the naturalistic worldview. Nature is thereby deemed to be the sum total of reality. Nothing whatsoever exists outside of nature, and even intellectual experience and human consciousness are explained by natural causes. Dilthey focuses on two fundamental aspects of naturalism in his discussion, sensationalist epistemology and mechanistic metaphysics.

First, the naturalistic theory of cognition has its basis in sensationalism.

1st Paradigm
Knowledge is thus derived from physically determined cognitive processes, and along with it all values and goals are evaluated by the experience of physical pleasure or pain. Sensationalism, as "the direct philosophical expression of the naturalistic habit of soul" (p. 54), becomes the basis for epistemology, axiology, and morality in this paradigm. The result of sensationalism in cognition, however, is relativism, as Protagoras demonstrated so long ago. Over against this relativity, it was necessary for naturalism to establish cognition and a science of cognition on its own assumptions. Carneades struggled with this problem in the ancient world, as did David Hume in the eighteenth century. In the context of later-day positivism, sensationalism was detached from any metaphysical association, and was deemed to be part and parcel of the positivist method of knowing in which "the brilliant perspicuity of the sensible" world was achieved (p. 57).

Second, the metaphysics of naturalism from the atomists onward was primarily mechanistic: the world is conceived exclusively in physical terms as a law-abiding machine. Ideas, the causes of motion, and intellectual facts are all reduced to the functioning of the cosmic mechanism, which is stripped entirely of the enlivening effects once supplied by religion, myth, and poetic fiction. "Nature," in short, "lost its soul" (p. 57). The task incumbent upon mechanists

Social and Cultural Outlook (New York: Dutton, 1945), pp. 13-29. Sorokin's "ideational" reality value equates to Dilthey's "idealism of freedom," his "idealistic" reality value corresponds to Dilthey's "objective idealism," and his "sensate" reality value matches Dilthey's "naturalism." Sorokin's own categories have been recently revived and updated by Harold O. J. Brown in his *The Sensate Culture: Western Civilization between Chaos and Transformation* (Dallas: Word, 1996).

Interesting attempt at a "Schematic"
 BUT way too limited.
 WORLDVIEW

was to draft some model of intellectual life out of a universe consisting entirely of particles in motion. This was done in the ancient world in an admirable way by Epicurus and Lucretius, and later on by Hobbes, Feuerbach, Buechner, and Moleschott. In the eighteenth century this mechanistic metaphysic, with its thoroughgoing naturalism and rationalism, rejected every transcendental value and goal, and used its growing political power to eliminate every vestige of superstition and religion and to overthrow the tyranny of the church.

oh oh
 here
 come
 Hegel
 1st
 paradigm

The inner dialectic that pervades naturalism arises from the conflict between the perception of nature and the self-perception of consciousness. In Dilthey's words, "Man is a slave of this course [of nature] because of his passions — a shrewdly calculating slave. However . . . he is superior to nature by the power of his mind" (p. 58). The theme of human beings as sensual slaves is worked out in the hedonistic thought of Aristippus on the basis of presuppositions supplied by Protagoras, while the advantages conferred on human beings by their minds are worked out by Democritus, Epicurus, and Lucretius (especially in his poem *De rerum natura*) in their concept of "the serenity of the mind" (p. 59). Thus the autonomous conscious mind is difficult to explain solely in terms of matter alone, and consequently the inner dialectic of naturalism inclined it toward the other paradigms. Still, the naturalistic worldview, with its rejection of all things invisible, exerted a powerful influence on "the poetical ideas, on literature, and on poetry" (p. 60).

2nd
 goes
 to
 Hegel

The Idealism of Freedom

Whereas naturalism has its origin in the experience of the physical world and the human body, the idealism of freedom originates out of the verities of mind and consciousness. It is the brainchild of the great ancient Athenian philosophers. This worldview boasts an amazing company of adherents: Anaxagoras, Socrates, Plato, Aristotle, Cicero, Christian apologists and Church Fathers, Duns Scotus, Kant, Jacobi, Maine de Biran, Bergson and other French thinkers. As Dilthey's sketch makes clear, the proponents of this vision of life, which radiates around the axis of mental and spiritual consciousness, are vehemently opposed to any and every form of naturalism and pantheism.

Really
 3rd
 paradigm
 Kant

5th
 paradigm
 Bergson

3rd
 paradigm
 ?

First, this worldview is an outgrowth of the idea of the sovereign superiority of the mind, which is separate and independent from every other kind of reality. The mind is free and unaffected by any form of physical causality. The mind's freedom in relation to itself and everything else is also the basis for human community wherein persons are tied together by ethical obligations and yet maintain their inward liberty. Springing out of this matrix of ideas is the notion of the unfettered, responsible individual in relation to God or Spirit, the

"absolute personal or free cause" (p. 63). The interplay between God and the world, from which the deity is clearly separated, has been conceived differently by various adherents to this outlook. Anaxagoras and Aristotle see the divine in relation to matter; Christianity focuses on a personal God who created the world *ex nihilo*; and Kant has articulated transcendence by positing God as the necessary postulate for pure practical reason.

Second, this worldview has been articulated metaphysically in a variety of ways. Attic philosophy spoke of a "formative intellect that transform matter into the world." Plato envisioned a mind free from nature which is able to grasp transcendental realities by the power of unaffected reason. Aristotle, says Dilthey, built on the same notion in his ethics. Christianity fosters a vision of God as the Creator who rules and governs his creation providentially as a father with whom communication is possible. In German transcendental philosophy, especially in Schiller, the idealism of freedom is brought to perfection in the exaltation of the ideal world which is posited by and exists only for the will in its endless striving.

The inner dialectic of this *Weltanschauung*, for which Schiller is the poet and Carlyle the prophet and historian, expresses itself in the fact that mind or spirit is not sufficient independently since it furnishes only a tenuous basis for the real world. In Dilthey's terms, "as the metaphysical consciousness of heroic man, it [the idealism of freedom] is indestructible and will come to life again in every great active man. However, it is unable to define and scientifically demonstrate its principle in a universally valid manner" (p. 65). It is thus compelled to accommodate a resistant reality that is conveyed by empirical experience. As naturalism tends to reduce mind to natural reality, so subjective idealism tends to reduce natural reality to mind. Hence the inner dialectic emerges out of this pensive opposition in both models. An alternative view of reality that integrates or synthesizes the mental and natural realms is needed. Such is the genius of the final worldview Dilthey proposes, which he labels objective idealism, a perspective on things that has pantheistic overtones.

Objective Idealism

Objective idealism, from Dilthey's point of view, attempts to integrate naturalism and subjective idealism by viewing the mind and empirical reality as an integrated, intuited whole.⁶² Aesthetics and contemplation are the generative atti-

62. Ermath, p. 334, says that though Dilthey is generally classed as an objective idealist for various reasons, this is not necessarily the case. He states, "If Dilthey is to be snared in his own typology, then he can be regarded as representing a combination of all three — with the major

WORLDVIEW

tudes of this outlook which, in Dilthey's estimate, constitutes the major strand in traditional metaphysics. Again, the proponents of this point of view constitute a veritable philosophical and literary hall of fame: Xenocrates, Heraclitus, Parmenides, the Stoics, Giordano Bruno, Spinoza, Shaftesbury, Herder, Goethe, Schelling, Hegel, Schopenhauer, and Schleiermacher. In broad brush, these devotees of pantheism teach that the world is the unfolding of God, who has diffused himself in the cosmos in countless ways. Every object in the universe mirrors the whole of which it is a part. As a monistic system, particulars are sublimated into the whole, even though individual entities possess value and reflect the whole macrocosm. Given these well-defined parameters, the advocates of objective idealism were just as vocal in their condemnation of naturalism and the idealism of freedom as the adherents of the idealism of freedom were against naturalism and objective idealism.

Naturalism is an impression determined by the subjugation of the intellectual facts to the mechanical order of things. The idealism of freedom is established in the facts of consciousness. The predominance of the body in naturalism and the soul in the idealism of freedom are combined in a body/soul amalgam in objective idealism. Objective idealism is also established upon the structure of the life of the thinkers who created the system, combining contemplation and sensual experiences into a kind of universal sympathy. By this, the whole of reality is filled and animated with the values, activities, and ideas of the human authors of this system. The sensation of being alive is expanded and attributed to the whole universe. The structure of the soul is united with the divine coherence of all things. Goethe, in a way like no one else, expressed these worldview conceptions in poetry.

The principle of unity and coherence in objective idealism causes all the discordances of life to be reconciled into one harmonious whole. Despite the contradictions of existence, there is an innermost core of everything that is real. The dissonances lead upward like a ladder to a point from which there is an awareness of a universal connection of existence and values. In objective idealism, there is the simultaneous view of all parts in their totality where they are unified and held together in harmony.

Metaphysically speaking, objects in the universe can be perceived in two ways. One, as objects of sense in an external physical connection. Two, as objects of coherence in an internal sense as a relation between the parts of the uni-

constituents being objective and subjective idealism, but with a considerable dose of naturalism. But such a characterization has only limited value at best, since Dilthey the catechist of the world views is beyond any one of them. Or perhaps it is more adequate to say that his interpretative posture is one of immanent critique: he is both immanent and transcendent to them."

A Philosophical History of "Worldview": The Nineteenth Century

verse and the divine core. Thus, according to Dilthey, "this consciousness of affinity is the main metaphysical feature [of objective idealism], equally inherent in the religiosity of the Indians, Greeks, and Germans" (p. 72). Since all things are a part of the whole, contemplation and intuition are to be understood ultimately in terms of a divine activity as "a living, divine, inward complex" (p. 73). On the basis of this same principle, there results a total determinism since all parts are ordered and governed by the necessary whole.

The inner dialectic produced by this model derives from the tension created in the mind's attempt to grasp reality as an integrated whole and what it can actually grasp in particular. Despite exhortations to the contrary, the whole remains an elusive ideal. As naturalism tends to reduce mind to natural reality, and as subjective idealism tends to reduce natural reality to mind, so objective idealism binds mind and matter together into a whole which is never fully comprehended. "Ultimately," according to Dilthey, speaking rather skeptically, "nothing remains of all metaphysical systems but a condition of the soul and a world view" (p. 74).

Summary

Dilthey's simple recognition of the conflict of philosophic systems and the increasing awareness of the historical condition of humanity led to the skeptical conclusion that there is no absolute, scientific, metaphysical construct which defines the nature of reality with finality. In other words, metaphysics does not have the answer. What is available, however, are worldviews — worldviews which are rooted in the contingencies of human and historical experience and which seek to elucidate the riddle of life. Worldviews not only reflect the structure of the human soul in its intellectual, affective, and volitional aspects, but are also influenced in their formation by the optimistic or pessimistic mood of the worldviewer. Worldviews are vehicles of expression for the religious, poetic, and metaphysical impulses of humanity, and can be categorized into the three basic types of naturalism, the idealism of freedom, and objective idealism. Each allegedly is privy to some aspect of reality. None of them, however, tell the whole story. According to Dilthey, therefore, one must never mistake one's corner for the world.

In light of all this, some critics assert that Dilthey found no rescue for his culture from the grip of metaphysical and epistemological relativism. When it comes to the nature of things, there is no god's-eye point of view, no pure *theorein* in the original sense of the term, no ocular clarity devoid of historical cataracts, no pure, universal reason. As Dilthey put it, "every cognitive effort is

WORLDVIEW

conditioned by the relation of the knowing subject and his historical horizon to a specific group of facts which is also conditioned in scope according to a specific horizon. For every attempt at understanding, the object is there only from a specific standpoint. Therefore, it is a specifically relative way of seeing and knowing its object.”⁶³ The concept of worldviews, therefore, generates seemingly an inescapable skepticism about truth and the ultimate nature of things. In this light, a fundamental question is posited in all its provocation and intensity: “what is the individual to do in this welter of relativities?”⁶⁴ One radical response to this dilemma is found in the thought of Friedrich Nietzsche, whose notion of perspectivism seems to carry the relativist implications of Dilthey’s doctrine of worldviews to their logical conclusion.

“Worldview” and Perspectivism in Friedrich Nietzsche

Friedrich Nietzsche (1844-1900) was the apogee of trends in Western philosophy launched by Kant’s Copernican revolution. The themes of the titanic self, the omniscient mind, thoroughgoing historicism, biological evolutionism, and radical relativism were for Nietzsche indicative of the death of the myth of God, whose existence had undergirded Western civilization for nearly two millennia. Not only was Nietzsche the one in whom these trends met, but he was also architect of a fleet of philosophical lifeboats — *Übermenschen*, Dionysianism, transvaluationism, linguisticism, aestheticism — which he deployed to rescue moderns who were threatened by the encroaching floodwaters of nihilism that were inundating the West. By virtue of his incisive understanding of the inevitable drift of Western thought and in light of his bold proposals for a new age, Nietzsche was not only the *terminus ad quem* of the nineteenth century but also the *terminus a quo* of the twentieth.

Central to Nietzsche’s appraisal of his times were the related notions of *Weltanschauung* and perspectivism. The breakdown of Christianity and the eventual collapse of idealist philosophy meant the elimination of any kind of transcendent or mental category as a metaphysical reference point, leaving only nature and the ongoing historical process as the two foci for understanding the world and human life. Nineteenth-century naturalism and historicism, consequently, set the stage for Nietzsche’s thought. Peter Levine believes that his en-

63. From *Gesammelte Schriften*, 7:233; quoted in Ermath, p. 289.

64. H. A. Hodges, *Wilhelm Dilthey: An Introduction* (New York: Howard Fertig, 1969), p. 104. For an attempt to exonerate Dilthey from the charge of relativism and skepticism, see Ermath, pp. 334-38.

A Philosophical History of "Worldview": The Nineteenth Century

counter with historical diversity as a philologist first led him to conclude "that people must be the products, results, or mere 'fluctuations' of real entities that he called cultures or *Weltanschauungen* — world-views," each of which "encompassed a consistent, homogeneous and clearly delimited set of values."⁶⁵ Not only did Nietzsche's exposure to historicism in the context of his philological studies incline him toward such strong relativism, but so also did influences from Immanuel Kant and Ralph Waldo Emerson.

With Kant, Nietzsche certainly believed in the constructive nature and activity of the human mind, only more so. Nietzsche embraced the Kantian a priori categories not by asking how the judgments they produced are possible, but by asking why they are necessary.⁶⁶ For Nietzsche the judgments were necessary not because they were true (in fact, they probably were not), but rather because they were indispensable for the preservation and survival of humanity. Conceptual schemes were a human necessity. Furthermore, Nietzsche did not believe that the specific Kantian categories were the only ones possible. His exaltation of freedom and embrace of the Dionysian imagination led him to aver that the mind's operation on the world was ceaselessly creative. According to Mary Warnock, he believed that "our contribution to, indeed our construction of, our world is a fact; but we could construct it a different way [from the Kantian one]."⁶⁷ This position, allowing for multiple cognitive pathways, plus Nietzsche's rejection of Kant's notion of a reality in itself, the *ding an sich* (which for him was worthy only "of Homeric laughter; that it appeared to be so much, indeed everything, and is actually empty, that is to say empty of significance"),⁶⁸ fostered in him a deep appreciation for the reality of multiple logics.

Another compelling force on Nietzsche's philosophical development was, perhaps surprisingly, Ralph Waldo Emerson (1803-82), whom he read assidu-

65. Peter Levine, *Nietzsche and the Modern Crisis of the Humanities* (Albany: State University of New York Press, 1995), p. xiii. George J. Stack, *Nietzsche: Man, Knowledge, and Will to Power* (Durango, Colo.: Hollowbrook Publishing, 1994), p. 96, points out that Nietzsche's philological studies produced in him a "sensitivity to the [historical] problems of textual interpretation [that] tended to spread to a variety of aspects of existence, to questions of truth in philosophy and science, and to the general issue of our knowledge of the world."

66. Friedrich Nietzsche, *Beyond Good and Evil*, in *Basic Writings of Friedrich Nietzsche*, translated and edited with commentaries by Walter Kaufmann (New York: Modern Library, 1968), p. 209 (§11).

67. Mary Warnock, "Nietzsche's Conception of Truth," in *Nietzsche's Imagery and Thought: A Collection of Essays*, ed. Malcolm Pasley (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1978), p. 38.

68. Friedrich Nietzsche, *Human, All Too Human: A Book for Free Spirits*, trans. R. J. Hollingdale, introduction by Erich Heller, *Texts in German Philosophy*, gen. ed. Charles Taylor (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1986), p. 20 (§17).

WORLDVIEW

ously and sympathetically over a twenty-six-year period.⁶⁹ Emerson's essay "Experience" was particularly influential in its description of the powerful impact of subjective factors on the human exchange with the world. Our temperament, Emerson argued, deeply conditions our worldview by the way it "enters fully into the system of illusions and shuts us in a prison of glass which we cannot see."⁷⁰ Thus Emerson declared that "we do not see directly, but mediately, and that we have no means of correcting these colored and distorting lenses which we are, or of computing the amount of their errors. Perhaps these subject-lenses have a creative power."⁷¹ Creative subjective lenses and diverse personal temperaments, plus a whole host of other conditionals, radically determine the way human beings interpret the world and operate within it. "Thus inevitably," Emerson concluded, "does the universe wear our color, and every object fall successively into the subject itself."⁷²

Under these Kantian and Emersonian influences, along with the a prioris of naturalism and historicism, Nietzsche formulated his thinking about "worldview." Levine suggests that "Nietzsche did depend upon the concept of the *Weltanschauung* at an early stage in his development," and that "without it, the later stages would not have followed."⁷³ He employed the word often enough. A computer search of Nietzsche's complete works in German reveals fifty uses of *Weltanschauung* (two spelled with only one *u*), one use of the plural form *Weltanschauungen*, five uses of *Weltansicht* (also translated "worldview"), and twenty-four uses of *Weltbild* (world picture).⁷⁴ He seems to have defined "worldview" in a rather ordinary way as a perspective on reality and basic conception of life. He frequently associates a name, nation, religion, era, race, or metaphysic with *Weltanschauung*. For example, he can speak of the Hellenic, Dionysian, Christian, Hegelian, and mechanistic views of life.⁷⁵ A survey of the texts in which these phrases occur shows that Nietzsche did not spend much

69. Stack, pp. 97-98.

70. Ralph Waldo Emerson, "Experience," in *Selected Essays* (Chicago: People's Book Club, 1949), p. 285.

71. Emerson, p. 300.

72. Emerson, p. 303.

73. Levine, p. xv.

74. Friedrich Nietzsche database in "Past Masters in Philosophy," InteLex Corporation.

75. The following citations of Nietzsche's use of *Weltanschauung* are from his *Sämtliche Werke: Kritische Studienausgabe in 15 Bänden*, herausgegeben von Giorgio Colli und Mazzino Montinari (New York and Berlin: Walter de Gruyter, 1980): "the dionysian worldview," 1:551, 598; 15:23, 25, 26, 27; "the Christian worldview," 7:13; "worldview of the Hegelian epoch," 7:61; "in the worldview from Sophocles to Apollo," 7:67; "Hellenic worldview," 7:75; "the tragic worldview," 7:79, 118, 123, 288; "the musical worldview," 7:116; "the mystical worldview," 7:123; "a mechanistic worldview," 2:200; "metaphysical worldview," 15:102; "the Nietzschean worldview," 15:197.

A Philosophical History of "Worldview": The Nineteenth Century

time reflecting upon the nature of *Weltanschauung* per se, though a sketch of his understanding of it is possible in light of the ethos of his own philosophy.

Nietzsche believes worldviews are cultural entities which people in a given geographical location and historical context are dependent upon, subordinate to, and products of. He posits a general law that "every living thing can become healthy, strong and fruitful only within a horizon."⁷⁶ A *Weltanschauung* provides this necessary, well-defined boundary that structures the thoughts, beliefs, and behaviors of people. From the point of view of its adherents, a worldview is incontestable and provides the ultimate set of standards by which all things are measured. It supplies the criteria for all thinking and engenders a basic understanding of the true, the good, and the beautiful. Worldviews for Nietzsche tend to be incommensurable constructs that render cross-cultural communication difficult if not impossible.

According to Nietzsche, worldviews are nothing but reifications. They are the subjective creations of human knowers in formative social contexts who ascribe their outlook to nature, God, law, or some other presumed authority. But they forget that they themselves are the creators of their own model of the world. The alleged "truth" of a worldview is merely an established convention — the product of linguistic customs and habits. Nietzsche's answer to the question about the nature of truth in general would apply equally well to the question about the alleged truth claims of any worldview. When he asks, "What, then, is truth?" he responds with these provocative words: "A mobile army of metaphors, metonyms, and anthropomorphisms — in short, a sum of human relations, which have been enhanced, transposed, and embellished poetically and rhetorically, and which after long use seem firm, canonical, and obligatory to a people: truths are illusions about which one has forgotten that this is what they are; metaphors which are worn out and without sensuous power; coins which have lost their pictures and now matter only as metal, no longer as coins."⁷⁷

76. Friedrich Nietzsche, *On the Advantage and Disadvantage of History for Life*, translated and introduction by Peter Preuss (Indianapolis: Hackett, 1980), p. 10 (§1). Gadamer, p. 301, describes the concept of horizon and discusses the meaning attributed to it by Nietzsche and Husserl. He writes: "The horizon is the range of vision that includes everything that can be seen from a particular vantage point. Applying this to the thinking mind, we speak of narrowness of horizon, of the possible expansion of horizon, of the opening up of new horizons, and so forth. Since Nietzsche and Husserl, the word has been used in philosophy to characterize the way in which thought is tied to its finite determinacy, and the way one's range of vision is gradually expanded."

77. Friedrich Nietzsche, "On Truth and Lie in an Extra-Moral Sense," in *The Portable Nietzsche*, ed. and trans. Walter Kaufmann (New York: Penguin Books, 1982), pp. 46-47.

WORLDVIEW

In other words, out of the dynamics of a human community words are established, conceptions become fixed, and truths are institutionalized. Worldviews feign authenticity, but actually are artificial constructs necessary for human survival. As Nietzsche makes clear, “*Truth is that kind of error without which a certain species of living [human beings] cannot exist.*”⁷⁸ There is no true truth, only subjective projections, linguistic customs, habituated thinking, and reified cultural models. All worldviews are ultimately fictions.

In the absence of true truth, the mandatory question for Nietzsche and his age is how to live meaningfully in the face of the metaphysical, epistemic, and moral nihilism native to *Weltanschauung* historicism. This question seems all the more intensified in light of Nietzsche’s deliberations on perspectivism which are closely related to *Weltanschauung*. Like the latter, perspectivism focuses on an individual’s unique interpretation of any and every possible object, including the world on the grand scale, for one’s “perspective” on the “world” is presumably one’s worldview, or world perspective. In Robin Small’s succinct words, “perspectivism means that the world is always understood within the perspective of some point of view; all knowledge is thus an interpretation of reality in accordance with the set of assumptions that makes one perspective different from another.”⁷⁹ There is, therefore, an interface between worldview and perspectivism.

A complete perspectivism is at the heart of Nietzsche’s philosophy. His writings are brimming with aphorisms and declarations about the perspectival nature of all cognition and perception. For example, in *The Genealogy of Morals* Nietzsche states, “There is only a seeing from a perspective, only a ‘knowing’ from a perspective, and the *more* emotions we express over a thing, the *more* eyes, different eyes, we train on the same thing, the more complete will be our ‘idea’ of that thing, our ‘objectivity.’”⁸⁰ Thoroughgoing perspectivism thus renders genuine objectivity farcical. That there is only perspectival seeing and knowing implies that “there are no facts, only interpretations.”⁸¹ For Nietzsche there are no objective personalities and therefore no objective points of view,

78. Friedrich Nietzsche, *The Will to Power*, trans. Anthony M. Ludovici, in *The Complete Works of Friedrich Nietzsche*, ed. Oscar Levy, vol. 15 (New York: Russell and Russell, 1964), p. 13 (§493).

79. Robin Small, “Nietzsche and a Platonist Idea of the Cosmos: Center Everywhere and Circumference Nowhere,” *Journal of the History of Ideas* 44 (January-March 1983): 99.

80. Friedrich Nietzsche, *The Genealogy of Morals*, in *The Complete Works of Friedrich Nietzsche*, ed. Oscar Levy, vol. 13 (New York: Russell and Russell, 1964), p. 153 (§12).

81. Friedrich Nietzsche, *Nachlaß*, in *Nietzsche’s Werke in Drei Bände*, ed. Karl Schlechta (Munich: Carl Hanser Verlag, 1958), p. 903, quoted in Arthur C. Danto, *Nietzsche as Philosopher* (New York: Macmillan, 1965), p. 76.

A Philosophical History of "Worldview": The Nineteenth Century

only subjective persons and person-relative points of view. Thought, therefore, is the product of visceral humanity. "It is our needs," Nietzsche says, "that *interpret the world*."⁸² All hermeneutic endeavors (artistic, scientific, religious, moral) are a "symptom of a ruling instinct."⁸³ There are no, to use a phrase from Nietzsche in another context, "immaculate perceptions."⁸⁴ Or, as Nietzsche wrote in a letter, there are "no single beatific interpretations."⁸⁵ Thus the conclusion is that there can be no pure facts, only hundreds of interpretations, feelings, guesses, hunches, opinions, and intuitions. For "our ideas, our values, our yeas and nays, our ifs and buts, grow out of us with the necessity with which a tree bears fruit."⁸⁶

Thus, when it comes to views of self, the world, and everything else, the human race speaks in many different tongues. This hetero-glossolalia reflects the limitless possibilities for world interpretation, what Nietzsche, in a play on religious language, called "our new 'infinite.'" "The world," he claims, "has once more become 'infinite' to us: in so far as we cannot dismiss the possibility that it contains infinite interpretations."⁸⁷ The ocean provides Nietzsche with an apt metaphor for the vast yet frightening opportunities for worldview and perspectival exploration cut off from traditional verities. "In the horizon of the infinite. — We have left the land and have embarked. We have burned our bridges behind us — indeed, we have gone farther and destroyed the land behind us. Now, little ship, look out! Beside you is the ocean. . . . Woe, when you feel homesick for the land as if it had offered more *freedom* — and there is no longer any 'land.'"⁸⁸ This journey into the landless sea is precisely what the Nietzschean doctrine of *Weltanschauung* and perspectivism is about.

82. Nietzsche, *The Will to Power*, p. 13 (\$481).

83. Nietzsche, *The Will to Power*, p. 150 (\$677).

84. Friedrich Nietzsche, *Thus Spoke Zarathustra*, in *The Portable Nietzsche*, p. 233.

85. Quoted in Jean Granier, "Perspectivism and Interpretation," in *The New Nietzsche*, edited with an introduction by David B. Allison (Cambridge: MIT Press, 1985), p. 197.

86. Friedrich Nietzsche, *On the Genealogy of Morals*, trans. and ed. Walter Kaufmann (New York: Modern Library, 1968), p. 452 (\$2).

87. Friedrich Nietzsche, *The Joyful Wisdom*, trans. Thomas Common, in *The Complete Works of Friedrich Nietzsche*, ed. Oscar Levy, vol. 10 (New York: Russell and Russell, 1964), p. 340 (\$374).

88. Friedrich Nietzsche, *The Gay Science, with a Prelude in Rhymes and an Appendix of Songs*, translated with commentary by Walter Kaufmann (New York: Random House, Vintage Books, 1974), pp. 180-81 (\$124).

Concluding Implications

In this chapter we have examined the fortunes of *Weltanschauung* in the thought of four very remarkable nineteenth-century thinkers. Whether in Hegelian idealism, Kierkegaardian existentialism, Diltheyan historicism, and Nietzschean perspectivism, the idea of worldview found a home in these diverse universes of discourse. Each raises important questions and issues pertaining to the idea of worldview from a Christian vantage point.

For Hegel, worldviews as alternative frameworks are the historically embedded, culturally significant phenomena of the Absolute Spirit, each of which finds expression aesthetically. The truth about the universe — the final worldview — awaits eschatological realization at the end of time. Would it not be more biblically correct, however, to attribute the production and influence of multiple conceptual schemes not to the philosophical fantasy of some alleged Absolute Spirit in search of itself, but rather to the rulers, the powers, the world forces of darkness, and the spiritual forces of wickedness in the heavenly places (see Eph. 6:12)? As Augustine pointed out long ago, at the heart of the historical process is a battle between the demonic spirits or powers and the Holy Spirit and their respective human adherents and agents who ultimately align themselves with either the city of man or the city of God. Interpreted in biblical terms, Hegel's philosophy of history ignites interest in understanding the historical process as spiritual warfare with the notion of competing worldviews at the center (see more on this in chap. 9). He also invites consideration of the manner in which art serves as a powerful communicative medium of diverse *intellectūs*. Since the aesthetic impulse is directed at least in part toward the expression of a particular outlook on life, how might Christian artists take their place on the stage of history and most effectively communicate a biblical vision of the world with sophistication and power? Finally, Hegel's eschatological orientation stimulates reflection on the Christian meaning of the end of history in terms of worldview. Is not the biblical eschaton designed in part to vindicate the sovereignty of God over against all competing authorities as well as to manifest the divine source, the sacramental character, and the glorious destiny of the entire cosmos in conquest of rival religious and philosophical explanations? At the end of history, the existence of God, the true nature of the universe, the identity of persons, and the purpose of life — issues which have been debated for millennia — are finally resolved.

For Kierkegaard, lifeviews are central to human existence. His valorization of the project of forming a lifeview, in particular a Christian one, seems well founded. It is a task from which no genuine believer is exempt. His exhortation to this end raises important questions, however, about the content, method,

and outcome of this endeavor. How does the Christian lifeview define the meaning of life and its purpose? As an unusual illumination about life, how is a lifeview formed, and to what extent is the process dependent upon the gracious activity of a sovereign God? What personal and communal benefits accrue from the development of a lifeview grounded in Christian truth? To employ Kierkegaardian categories, how does a biblically based lifeview affect literature, friendship, parenthood, and education, among other things? Kierkegaard distinguished sharply between the profound, existential nature of a lifeview and the disinterestedness of abstract, academic thought. How does this project of lifeview formation differ from the professional disciplines of theology and philosophy? Should it even replace these enterprises, as Kierkegaard suggested? If not, how ought the relationship between life and worldview, philosophy and theology be articulated? Kierkegaard was pessimistic about justifying the Christian lifeview epistemologically. Can a biblically based outlook be defended, and if so, how? Or is it truly a "leap of faith"? Though his denigration of the value of academic theology and philosophy and his diminution of the epistemic credibility of the Christian revelation raise serious concerns, Kierkegaard's advocacy of the practical, existential task of developing a Christian lifeview ought to be well received.

In Dilthey, worldviews are historically produced perspectives on reality. His reflections force us to confront the matter of historicism along with its associated relativism. The fact that human beings, given their various cognitive capacities, are embedded in the ebb and flow of history would seem to impart to their conceptual attempts to solve the riddle of life a highly relative quality. Are all worldviews, Christianity included, sucked into this black hole? Does everything that occurs *in* history also arise *from* history? An affirmative answer to this question is necessary only if one is committed antecedently to a perspective on life that eliminates any otherworldly reality and absolutizes the historical process. Conversely, leaving the door open to a transcendent principle or person which reveals itself or who communicates from the outside or the top down makes it possible to deny that the relativism of historicism has the last word.

Nonetheless, Dilthey's reflections make it clear that the question is not *whether* history shapes human consciousness, but rather *how* and with *what* content. This would even seem to be the divine plan and intent. God has chosen to reveal himself and his works of creation and redemption to Israel and the church through that particular strand of history that is set apart or holy: *Heilsgeschichte*. Therefore, on the one hand, contact with and acceptance of this unique stream of holy history — either directly, or by means of divine revelation, or by involvement in an historical and cultural context shaped by this

WORLDVIEW

revelation — would be necessary for the formation of a Judeo-Christian worldview. For the chain is this: sacred or holy history shapes regular history, which shapes the formation of consciousness. On the other hand, to be separated from or rebellious toward this Judeo-Christian revelation or an historical and cultural context shaped by it means to be barred from forming a biblically based view of life. Concomitantly, it means to be confined to the relative forces of the historical process, which itself may be indicative of the judgment of God in a fallen world upon a rebellious humanity. Thus Christians may agree with Dilthey when it comes to the role played by history in shaping consciousness and forming worldviews. History is the inescapable context of cultural communication. However, they would surely reinterpret his thesis of relativism even as a sign of judgment in light of divine revelation which offers a stable point of view on the nature of reality amidst the flux and change of historical life.

For Nietzsche, God is dead, only nature exists, and history reigns. On this basis he conceived of worldviews as reified cultural constructs and idiosyncratic perspectives on life, artificial to be sure, but necessary for human survival in an ultimately chaotic, unnavigable world. The Christian community would certainly challenge Nietzsche directly regarding his hard-core atheism, thoroughgoing naturalism, and radical historicism. As alternatives they would propose a doctrine of the Holy Trinity, the thesis of a very good creation, and a view of history as the arena of divine revelation. They would be open, however, to some of his insights about reification and perspectivism. Might not a Christian's worldview contain various elements that seem to be theologically grounded but are in fact merely conventional? Upon this recognition, what changes can and should be made in what Christians believe (*credenda*) and how they behave in the world (*agenda*)? The Nietzschean theme of reification may serve as an important corrective and help believers move toward a greater degree of biblical fidelity in their basic conception of life.

Though Nietzsche was extremist in his perspectivism, his position does contain an essential insight nevertheless: all human beings see things aslant, Christians included. This is what having a worldview, biblical or otherwise, is all about. It has to do with viewing the cosmos and all things within it through a particular set of lenses or from a specific point of view. If held in balance, this position can avoid the excesses of both modernist dogmatism and postmodernist skepticism and terminate in a kind of critical realism which recognizes the role of both objectivist and subjectivist factors in the knowing process. There is a real world to be known, but we always comprehend it from our vantage point. There seems to be a biblical warrant for this epistemology. As Paul himself said, "For now we see in a mirror dimly" (see 1 Cor. 13:12). Nietzsche's

A Philosophical History of "Worldview": The Nineteenth Century

perspectivism, therefore, can be appropriately modified to render an apt insight into the epistemic significance of worldviews (see chap. 10 for additional discussion). Meanwhile, we move on to consider the role of worldview in twentieth-century philosophy.