

The Unshakable Foundations of The Christian Worldview

By Peter Bocchino

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What are we bequeathing are children?

Plato said, “the direction in which education starts a person will determine his future.” If this is statement is true, then it is incumbent upon us to bequeath to our children a truly accurate academic and moral compass so that they can chart a safe and peaceful future. In other words, we must do our very best to provide them with a solid academic and moral foundation that will be capable of supporting the weight of life’s issues and challenges. Hence, the survival of our children’s future depends upon us, under God, and our ability to teach them how to think rationally about the ideas and philosophies, or *worldviews*, that penetrate the various social systems in the world today—in particular the educational institutions and governments.

Of course, in order to teach our children critical thinking skills and to pass on to them a solid academic and moral foundation, we must be able to think rationally about worldviews and how they relate to education and governments. This is important because the worldview that is taught in our universities in one generation will become the worldview that influences our governments and determine our laws in the next. The truth of this statement has been documented throughout history. In fact, one of the most shameful examples of this truth happened during the rein of the Third Reich. History has testified to the fact that a worldview can literally change the world. Therefore, we will begin by defining what a worldview is and why worldviews are vitally important.

What is a worldview is and why are worldviews important?

A worldview is a philosophical system that attempts to explain how the facts of reality relate and fit together. It is similar to a puzzle. The outer frame of the puzzle represents the essential components of the worldview that provide the framework for which the smaller pieces of life then fit. A worldview can also be thought of as an intellectual lens through which we view the world. Therefore, it is critically important to know which view of the world is the right worldview, because our view of reality will determine our view of life and our view of life will determine how much we value life. Furthermore, if a educational institutions teach the wrong worldview and the government of that society adopts it, it will be used as the basis for their laws.

For example, the government of Nazi Germany was not the originating cause of the Holocaust, but rather the worldview that the Nazis embraced. Victor Frankl, a survivor of Auschwitz, said,

The gas chambers of Auschwitz were the ultimate consequence of the theory that man is nothing but the product of heredity and environment—or, as the Nazis liked to say, “of blood and soil.” I am absolutely convinced that the gas chambers of Auschwitz . . . were ultimately prepared not in some ministry or other in Berlin, but rather at the desks and in the lecture halls of nihilistic scientists and philosophers.¹

¹ Viktor Frankl, *The Doctor and the Soul: Introduction to Logotherapy* (New York: Knopf, 1982), xxi.

Hitler wanted a certain worldview to be taught in educational institutions in order to have the next generation finish what the Nazis had started. In *Mein Kampf* he revealed the nature of that worldview when he said,

The whole *organization of education* . . . is to . . . instill into the hearts and brains of the youth . . . a clear insight into the meaning of racial purity . . . *for the preservation of our race.*² The stronger must dominate and not mate with the weaker. . . . *for if such a law did not direct the process of evolution then the higher development of organic life would not be conceivable at all.* . . . If Nature does not wish that weaker individuals should mate with the stronger, she wishes even less that a superior race should intermingle with an inferior one; because . . . all her efforts . . . to establish *an evolutionary higher stage* of being, may thus be rendered futile.³

Hitler's will power to see his program through to the end, was particularly inspired by the writings of the eminent German atheist Friedrich Nietzsche. Nietzsche wrote about a concept he called the "overman" (or Superman). Nietzsche's "overman" is the person who can have victory over life's miseries through self-assertion and *the will to power*. Now, take Nietzsche's will to power and link it to Hitler's goal of establishing "*an evolutionary higher stage of being*" and you have the right ingredients for the Holocaust. Darwin's belief in "the survival of the fittest" provided the right intellectual justification to sanction the Nazis racial bigotry. Darwin made it very clear that his theory included the races. In fact, the subtitle of *On The Origin of Species* reads, *By Means of Natural Selection or the Preservation of Favoured Races in the Struggle for Life*. Darwin's theory became the driving force behind the Nazis eugenics research program and fueled their zeal for racial cleansing. Let me be clear on this point. I am not saying that every atheist or Darwinian naturalist would agree with the Nazis, what I am saying is that the overall goal of Nazi Germany was a logical extension of their worldview.

It is apparent to me that since academics play an essential role in providing the infrastructure of a worldview, and since a worldview has the power to change the world, then we need to discover which worldview is academically sound.

How can we know which worldview is true?

In order to test the truth of a worldview, one must start with its foundations. In a group of essays called the *Logic or Organon*, Aristotle established the difference between valid and invalid forms of human reasoning. His aim was to make plain the steps by which a body of knowledge, or worldview, ought to be logically constructed. Aristotle showed how every field of knowledge begins with certain self-evident truths or *first principles*. It is important to understand that first principles are *not* conclusions found at the end of a set of premises, but rather self-evident premises from which conclusions are drawn.

First principles can also be thought of as both the underlying and the governing principles of a worldview and, accordingly, ought to be our starting point. These axioms ought to serve as shared premises or common ground in academics, because they are so obviously reasonable that they neither demand nor admit direct proof. In fact, they are inescapable in nature. Allow me to illustrate the soundness of this claim by using the first principle of philosophy, with respect to the nature of truth.

Philosophy assumes that there exists some independent and unchanging reality, about which statements can be made that correspond to it. In other words, truth, by definition, is a statement that matches reality. This assumption forms the first principle of philosophy. Now, if this is true, then I ought to be able to

² Adolf Hitler, *Mein Kampf* (London: Hurst and Blackett Ltd., 1939) 240 (emphasis added).

³ *Ibid.*, 161-162.

show that this truth is inescapable, because first principles are unavoidable. For example, some people believe that there is no such thing as truth. However, I would simply ask them, “Is your view true?” If they say yes, then truth does exist and their statement is self-defeating. If they say no, indicating that their view is false, then I can simply ask them, “Is it *true* that your view is false?” Either way, to deny the existence of truth is to affirm its existence—truth is inescapable! Therefore, the belief that truth exists— independent of human opinion—is an inescapable and rationally justifiable first principle of philosophy.

However, philosophy merely informs us that some independent reality exists. In order to find out more about this reality, let’s look to science. Science also has an inescapable first principle called the *principle of causality*. The causality principle states that every finite, dependent, and contingent thing must have had a beginning and therefore needs a cause. When we connect the principle of causality to the foremost law of science, the second law of thermodynamics, what logically follows is that the universe needs a cause. The reason for this conclusion is that the second law of thermodynamics tells us that the universe is running out of usable energy. If so, then it must have had a beginning, because only finite things run out of *usable* energy. So, according to the second law of thermodynamics, the universe had a beginning and according to the principle of causality, it is most reasonable to conclude that the universe had an infinitely powerful First Cause.

Science can also tell us something more about this First Cause. Einstein discovered that time is a finite part of the cosmos, a fourth dimension. If time is a finite part of the universe, then to be outside of time is to be eternal and unchangeable because time and change are necessary concomitants. Therefore, based upon the principle of causality and the foremost law of science, it is reasonable to conclude that this infinitely powerful First Cause is also eternal and unchanging. Or simply stated, this First Cause has the same essential attributes of the God of biblical theism. However, the God of the Bible is personal and moral. So, to believe that Biblical theism is the right worldview, we need to show that this First Cause is personal and moral. Or else, it may just be some impersonal force. To find out whether or not this First Cause is personal and moral, let’s answer the following question by employing the first principles of history and law.

How do worldviews impact the laws of governments and human rights?

The late Oliver Wendell Holmes (former professor of law at Harvard Law School) said, “When I want to understand what is happening today or try to decide what will happen tomorrow, I look back. A page of history is worth a volume of logic.”⁴ I believe Holmes correctly articulated the first principle of history. That is, it is assumed that history can inform us about the past in such a way as to understand the present and provide wisdom to plot a trustworthy course for the future. If so, then there is one page in recent history that I think is worth several volumes of logic and can help us decide if the First Cause of the universe is also a personal and moral Being. The page I am referring to is the Nuremberg Trials.

In 1945, an International Military Tribunal, consisting of judges from the United States, England, France, and the Soviet Union, indicted top Nazi leaders for committing “crimes against humanity.” However, during those trials, the defense attorneys argued that the charges against the defendants were without legal merit. They said that the defendants were loyal officials of Germany who were merely obeying their orders and operating under the laws of their government. The defense basically reasoned that since laws were nothing but the arbitrary dictates of human legislators, and that each society had their own constitutions and form of government, there was no legal basis for other countries to judge the laws of Nazi Germany. This was basically the argument that the prosecution had to overcome, but how?

⁴ Laurence J. Peter, *Peter’s Quotations* (New York: Bantam, 1977), 244.

Robert H. Jackson, an Associate Justice of the United States Supreme Court, was appointed as Chief of Counsel to the International Military Tribunal and prosecutor on behalf of the United States. However, Jackson faced something new; there had never been an International Criminal Court in all of jurisprudential history and this trial would set a precedent for the future. Moreover, if laws are nothing but the arbitrary dictates of human legislators, how could Jackson prosecute Nazi leaders who were operating under a set of different laws, foreign to the laws of the allied nations? On what legal basis could the prosecution claim that the laws of other these countries were better laws than the laws of National Socialism?

If you were Robert Jackson what would you do? Here you are, standing in an international court of law that is about to shake the annals of jurisprudential history and you have no precedent which to cite, no jurisdiction, and no legal basis to prosecute the defendants. The only reasonable way to demonstrate their guilt was to prove that they were morally wrong and should be held accountable, even if there was no legal basis to do so. Yet, how could the prosecution make such an allegation? How could they accuse the defendants of immorality and put that charge into a legal framework?

The only way to do it was to appeal to the first principle of law. That is, that there exists a higher set of moral laws that transcend human governments and which are the assumptions of all civilizations. C.S. Lewis thoughtfully articulated this first principle of law in his book titled, *Mere Christianity*. Lewis said,

The moment you say that one set of moral ideas can be better than another, you are, in fact, measuring them both by a standard and saying that one of them conforms to that standard more nearly than the other. But the standard that measures two things is something different from either. You are, in fact, comparing them both with some Real Morality, admitting that there is such a thing as a real Right, independent of what people think. . . . [If not] there would be no sense in saying that any one nation had ever been more correct in its approval than any other; no sense in saying that the world could ever grow morally better or morally worse.”⁵

Robert Jackson based the guilt of the Nazis on this first principle of law and said,

We should not overlook the unique and emergent character of this body as an International Military Tribunal. It is no part of a constitutional mechanism of internal justice of any Signatory nations. . . . As an International Military Tribunal, *it rises above the provincial and transient and seeks guidance not only from International Law but also from the basic principles of jurisprudence which are assumptions of civilization.*⁶

What does that mean? How can any human law “rise above” other human statutes? A clear interpretation of Jackson’s closing statement was given in 1992. In that year, a former East German border guard, Ingo Heinrich, was charged with manslaughter. The charge came three years after he killed an innocent man who was attempting to gain his freedom by escaping to West Berlin. *Time* magazine reported that,

Heinrich was just following orders. “Shoot to kill” was the command for dealing with people who tried to escape across the border, and in the eyes of Heinrich’s supervisors *his actions were not only legal but commendable*. Three years later, . . . a different government holds sway and . . . he was convicted of manslaughter. . . . The trial judge said, for *following the laws of his country rather than asserting his conscience*. Said Judge Theodor Seidel: “*Not everything that is legal is [morally] right*.”

⁵ C. S. Lewis, *Mere Christianity* (New York: Macmillan, 1952), 25.

⁶ Robert H. Jackson, *The Nuremberg Case* (New York: Cooper Square, 1971), 120-122, (emphasis added).

The principle that an individual may be bound by a *higher moral authority*, beyond what the statutes provide, was established in West Germany decades ago, during trials of former Nazi leaders.”⁷

The only “higher authority” that can transcend human governments, is an intelligent and moral legislator. That is, a person who is the author of those higher moral laws. Therefore, it is reasonable to conclude that this infinitely powerful, eternal, and unchanging First Cause is also personal and moral. In other words, that the God of the Christian worldview does exist and has revealed Himself through His creation and through His moral laws, which are written on our consciences (Romans 1:19-20; 2:15).

It appears that Plato was right when he said, “the direction in which education starts a person will determine his future.” We need to never forget why the Holocaust happened and teach our children how to avoid it by bequeathing to them the only true worldview—the Christian worldview. However, I would be remiss if I did not include the unique and ultimate truth of the Christian worldview. C.S. Lewis approached this truth by saying,

Human beings all over the earth have this curious idea that they ought to behave in a certain way, and cannot really get rid of it. Secondly, they do not in fact behave in that way. They know . . . [God’s Moral Law]; they break it. These two facts are the foundation of all clear thinking about ourselves and the universe we live in.⁸

Lewis speaks the truth. We know God’s moral laws and actually believe that all people ought to obey them, yet we are powerless to keep them ourselves. Hence, we stand guilty before the Judge of the entire universe and without excuse. Jesus, knowing that we stand condemned, said that he came to “give his life as a ransom” for us (Matthew 20:28). In other words, he took our place and shielded us from the full judgment of God. Do you believe this to be true? I have given my reasons as to why the Christian worldview stands upon unshakable intellectual ground. But believing that Christianity is true, will never help you. There is only one person who can help, Jesus Christ. Listen to one of his final statements, standing before Pilate just before his crucifixion. Jesus said, “For this reason I was born, and for this I came into the world, to testify to the truth. Everyone on the side of truth listens to me” (John 18:37). The final question is up to you to answer, “Will you believe the words of Jesus Christ and stand with him on the side of truth?” I hope and pray that you will!

⁷ William A. Henry III, “The Price of Obedience,” *Time*, February 3, 1992, 23 (emphasis added).

⁸ C.S. Lewis, *Mere Christianity* (New York: Macmillan, 1952), 21.