

Discerning Worldviews: Distinguishing Core Perceptions
in Conceptualizing Worldview Distances

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My Western Christian worldview was immediately challenged to understand the Meru people's worldview when within three months of being on the field we observed a procession of *juju* (grandparents) whose faces and bodies were painted with white ochre and a white streak was running down the middle of their hair. I wrote the following shortly after the event.

On this selected day a secret procession begins its journey up Mount Nyambeni. As they make the slow ascent, they stake out the honey pots at seven spots along the way. The honey pots are left behind the procession to entice the evil spirits to stop for the honey instead of following the procession to the sacrificial area and hindering the sacrifice. When the procession arrives at the sacred place, they cry out to *Murungu (God)*. They then wait for His reply. If there is no reply the procession will return and try another time. If they receive a reply, usually a noise of some kind, they proceed with the sacrifice. They kill the seven rams and split them in half. One half of each ram is left for *Murungu* and the people eat the other seven halves. The procession then leaves with confidence that the rains will now begin. Further it was explained to me that going to the top of this specific mountain was significant as this was a location where there was always water and this was said to be the dwelling place of *Murungu*. (The Gospel to the Meru, 1 May 1984)

A short time later, further discussion on evil spirits came up again when some men in the village said to us, "We know when the evil spirits left our village. We heard their singing as they left." From this brief conversation the activities of the spiritual realm in the life of the Meru people was brought once again to our attention. Cross-cultural missions challenges us with cultural differences as well as the worldview perceptions that underlie the cultural structures, belief systems, and actions of a people group. A people's worldview is revealed in their daily lives. It is in the midst of those daily lives that missionaries need to discern

worldview differences to better share the gospel through seeking bridges between the Christian worldview and the worldview of the people whom they are serving. On that day in the village, we were introduced to the Meru's perception of an active spiritual realm consisting of evil and ancestral spirits who were highly involved in the physical world. Our Western Christian worldview was challenged as we began to live and work among the Meru while we searched for bridges. Realizing the worldview differences and distance helped us to contextualize the message in a more meaningful way.

An elderly Meru man once described to me the activities of the ancestral spirits. He pointed out places where they were more likely to be present, the need for being careful not to offend them and the importance of showing proper respect for them. A decade of work among the Meru people and fifteen years of continued involvement with leadership development has been an ongoing process of discerning further differences in my worldview as formed from my Western Christian heritage and the traditional worldview of the Meru people. The Meru Christians and I continue to share a journey of intercultural theological reflection in Christ, both informed by our respective worldviews.

Just how distant my Western Christian informed worldview was from the people I was working with further came to my attention through a discussion I had with a church leader one night when I found myself delayed in a village because of two flat tires with only one spare. As my tire disappeared into the night with a man who said he knew a guy that could fix it and even had a pump, I and a new leader of a three year old church plant were standing alongside the dirt road watching the full moon rise, pushing back the pitch black night. As we talked about the moon, I was curious as to what he would say about some American accomplishments. I proceeded to tell him about how the U.S. had build an

“airplane” (they had no word for spacecraft and the word for airplane was “bird”) which went to the moon that we were currently gazing upon. I explained that the men got out and walked around for a time and then returned to earth. He looked at me incredulously, then looked back and forth between the moon and me a couple of times, and just stated, “This cannot be.” It just did not seem conceivable in his present understanding of the world.

As I’m writing this article, an email pops up on my computer from a new missionary in East Africa working among an Islamic people group who shared the following which again emphasizes just how different worldviews can be.

Lately some *Waganga* ("good" witchdoctors) have been going around town trying to get rid of *Wachawi* ("bad" witchdoctors) that they claim are causing trouble in town. When they do this a huge crowd usually follows and cheers them on, watching them rid the area of evil spirits. Yesterday around 5:30 p.m. someone called the police to stop the *Waganga*. Some rumors say it was the owner of a house in the area who wasn't willing to participate when the *Waganga* claimed his house had bad spirits that they would have to remove; other rumors claim it was the mayor. . . .

Cross-cultural missionaries have wrestled with different worldviews throughout the years. In Roland Allen’s landmark work *Missionary Methods: St. Paul’s or Ours?*, he takes notice of a gradual formation of believers through an “abandonment of the old conception of life” to a new conception through faith in Christ, or what Hiebert refers to as transforming a worldview (2008). Allen states,

If our hope is to see gradual transformation of native religious thought and practice, and the gradual evolution of a higher type, we naturally deprecate sudden and startling rupture. The work of the Christian missionary is not to call men from the heathen temple into the Church of God but to trim the dimly glowing lamp of God in the heathen temple, and to pour into it a few drops of the oil of Christian doctrine till it shines with a new radiance (1965, 71).

Christian teaching challenges worldview perceptions and cultural practices of all peoples. Pouring those “few drops of oil” of Christian teaching into the culture structured by a non-Christian worldview requires that we come to a better understanding of the worldview

and culture. Understanding a worldview can prepare a person for how the Christian message may be understood and what challenges it brings to a people's worldview. This paper will proffer using worldview illustrative models to discern worldview differences and worldview distances that need to be bridged between a Christian worldview and other worldviews.

Worldview – The Value of a Concept

Paul and Barnabas' visit to Lystra on the first missionary journey is instructive in how the biblical message is received and the challenges it faces based on people's worldview. Their healing of a lame man in the midst of their teaching was perceived as an activity of the gods which fit the worldview of the people of the Lystra area. The people decided Zeus and Hermes had come for another visit to their area. So convinced were they that Paul and Barnabas were gods that the priest from the local temple dedicated to Zeus brought an ox as a sacrifice in their honor. This appears to have caught Paul and Barnabas by surprise.

A previous visit from Zeus and Hermes is recorded in Ovid's *Metamorphoses* in which an old couple shows them hospitality and is blessed while the rest of the villagers receive the wrath of the gods for their lack of friendliness. Whether this previous visit informed their worldview or not, their reaction to Paul and Barnabas' teachings is instructive in seeing a people's worldview, their interpretation of the message they heard, and their perception of the reality of the spiritual realm.¹

¹ See *Metamorphoses* 8: 955ff by P. Ovidius Naso, ed. Brookes More, Perseus Digital Library. Ovid describes a story from the Phrygia region where Zeus and Hermes were searching for hospitality, but they were met with rejection by everyone except for a poor elderly couple by the name of Philemon and Baucis. The couple showed them hospitality at the expense of their own needs, and they were rewarded by the gods by their cottage being transformed into a grand temple. The inhospitable neighbors suffered punishment by a severe flood.

Although we can experience worldview differences within our own culture, radical differences between worldviews are often experienced when working in a cross-cultural environment. Missionaries' participation in God's mission requires us to prepare for our own Lystra event. Comprehending worldview differences between Christianity and other belief systems is important, particularly because peoples' belief systems are integrated with their perception of reality, i.e. worldview. Worldviews provide particular understandings of the world that impact the notion of ultimate reality, the composition of the world we live in with both its spiritual and physical dimensions, the connection between the two and the ultimate goal of a particular belief system or religion.

Stephen Prothero in his book *God is Not One* has provided a good overview of the problems with the commonly repeated idea that all religions are different roads to the same destination. He notes, "The ideal of religious tolerance has morphed into the straitjacket of religious agreement We pretend these differences are trivial because it makes us feel safer, or more moral. But pretending that the world's religions are the same does not make our world safer. Like all forms of ignorance, it makes our world more dangerous." He points out the need for the recognition of those differences in order to have a better understanding of one another because without a better understanding "tolerance and respect are empty virtues" (2010, 4-5).

Numbers of religious differences occur because of a difference in the underlying worldviews. Although "worldview" can be defined in many ways, in this article I will use Hiebert's definition: Worldview is "the foundational cognitive, affective and evaluative

assumptions and frameworks a group of people make about the nature of reality which they use to order their lives” (2008, 25-26).²

Religions’ beliefs and practices can reveal a great deal about a culture’s worldview or at minimum indicate the worldview of a group within a broader pluralistic society.

Understanding the differences between worldviews that religions manifest through religious teachings and practices is critical to carrying on God’s mission by His church. God called and continues to call His disciples to the “*ethne*,” the nations, the diverse, colorful, gifted, corrupted, imperfect world to represent His love shown by the cross. Contextualizing the gospel through our actions and in our presentation of the message requires an understanding of people’s perception of reality. Deeper contextualization of the gospel on the mission field necessitates discerning differences in worldviews. It also means that we need to be able to perceive the distance our Christian worldview is from those to whom we hope to share in theological reflection. Contextualizing the message within a culture has greater validity when the communicator understands cultural norms and the worldview that underlies them. Theology takes place in the interaction between the communication of the gospel and the people’s belief system. As Bevans points out, all theology takes place in contexts and are “contextual theologies” (2009, 167). The context is informed by the worldview of the people.

² Charles Kraft defines worldview “as the totality of the culturally structured images and assumptions (including value and commitment or allegiance assumptions) in terms of which a people both perceive and respond to reality” (2008, 12). James Sire defines worldview from a philosophical perspective as “a commitment, a fundamental orientation of the heart, that can be expressed as a story or in sets of presuppositions (assumptions which may be true, partially true or entirely false) which we hold (consciously or subconsciously, consistently or inconsistently) about the basic constitution of reality, and that provides the foundation on which we live and move and have our being” (2004, 17). David Naugle proffers, “Roughly speaking, it refers to a person’s interpretation of reality and a basic view of life” (2002, 260). Michael Kearney states, “The world view of a people is their way of looking at reality. It consists of basic assumptions and images that provide a more or less coherent, though not necessarily accurate, way of thinking about the world” (1984, 41).

Models and Missions

A worldview ultimately includes everything a person or a group of people understand or believe about the world with many individual variations. As Hiebert reminds us, “A worldview is not the sum of the many cultural parts. It is the configuration by which we seek to interpret those parts” (Hiebert 2008, 275). Because our world is so complex with multitudes of variations, options, and alternative ways of perceiving and interpreting things, we are limited by our own perceptions, contexts, experiences, and cultural dispositions to fully explain complex phenomena. To deal with such complexity, we create models to understand more complex structures. A model is “a relatively simple, artificially constructed case which is found to be useful and illuminating for dealing with realities that are more complex and differentiated” (Dulles 1983, 30). As Bevans notes in dealing with models of contextual theology, a model is “a kind of pattern or template that offers a way of performing a task.” They are not “useful fictions,” but “they do indeed disclose actual features in the matter under investigation, and they are disclosive of reality” (2009, 168).

Models serve to direct our study and thinking toward understanding specifics within the models. Specific phenomena or systems are explained with models. The structure of the atom is explained in a model. The simplified model of our solar system has recently undergone change with Pluto downgraded to a non-planet. This did not diminish the solar system model, but the model provided structure to discuss deeper issues given a broad understanding of the basic system. Models are employed in every discipline to outline complex phenomena to make their multifaceted nature more manageable in understanding the broad picture while providing direction for deeper investigation into nuances of the modeled event or system.

Missiology and theology employ models to describe various complex phenomena. In missiology a number of models have been put forward such as Winter's E-Scale and P-Scale to compare the cultural distances that Christians or prospective converts need to move in the evangelizing process (Winter and Koch 1999, 510) or Engel's model of "spiritual-decision processes" (Engel and Norton 1975, 44-45). The C1 to C6 spectrum of contextualization among Muslims provides another model of six types of "Christ-centered communities" in a spectrum that is differentiated by culture, language, worship appearance, degree of freedom to worship with others, and religious identity (Parshall 1998, 407-08).³ Mark Williams' article on *Revisiting the C1-C6 Spectrum in Muslim Contextualization* is an example of taking an existing model, re-envisioning it, and modifying it, in this case, to a circular progression rather than a linear one to give a clearer picture of a contextualization process (2011, 346). Bevan proposes a number of models of contextualization laid out on a spectrum (2009, 171). The above models have value in facilitating understanding of a highly complex process or system. Similarly, worldview models can be used to discern and compare broad areas of reality between diverse peoples.

Discerning Worldview Distance

It has been argued that there are a number of biblical worldviews, or as Kraft argues, there is no single Christian worldview (2010, 30). However, when we talk of a certain people group's worldview or offer a "Christian worldview," we are proposing a broad structure that provides a means of discussing complex issues related to understanding Christianity and other belief systems, their perception of both physical and spiritual realities,

³ Roger Dixon is right in noting that the term "contextualize" is only used in describing C3 and C4 communities; however, the impression is given that all the others should be considered "contextualized models" (2009, 4). Phil Parshall reinforces this notion by referring to the spectrum as a model of contextualization.

differences between various perspectives, and epistemological issues. A broad “Christian worldview” model also allows us to discern differences and commonalities between other worldviews as well as indicate areas of differences within the broader Christian worldview. As Hiebert rightly asserts, “To say that there is no biblical worldview is to deny that there is an underlying unity of the biblical story. . . . It is to say that there is no single story running from creation to Christ’s return, no underlying dignity of humanity, and no universal morals” (2008, 265-66). Other belief systems also have basic unifying features that provide a means for understanding the overall worldview and, therefore, allowing comparison between the worldviews. Worldviews give us models of reality which describe and explain the nature of the world as well as reasons for cultural structures which function as blueprints for how people behave (Hiebert 2008, 28).

Kearney analyzes and compares worldviews from an anthropological and materialist perspective through various universals, “self and other,” “classification,” “relationship,” “causality,” and “time and space” (1984, 65-107). He illustrates a worldview model where the “way of perceiving the environment is nothing more nor less than their world view The environment thus shapes world view; in other words, the way in which the environment is perceived is largely dependent on the nature of the environment itself. . .” (1984, 120-21). Hiebert notes various other ways worldviews can be analyzed to understand peoples’ perspectives of the world in which they live. Each of these methods is limited and cannot in and of themselves give a full picture of a worldview. They all provide means by which to investigate differing worldviews and allow comparisons between them. Hiebert utilizes Robert Redfield’s seven themes for exploring cultures which overlap with Kearney’s: “the nature and place of time, space, self and other, nonhumans, causality and common human

experience” (2008, 26). Kraft notes that “a people’s worldview provides them with a lens, model or map in terms of which reality is perceived and interpreted” (2010, 18).

The worldview can be a useful tool for theology and missions, particularly in understanding differences in people’s perceptions (Naugle 2002, 290). Despite the complexity of fully understanding any particular worldview, along with the multiplicity of possible variations, some broad areas of perception can be defined with a delineation of differences and commonalities within those perceptions. For the purpose of this article I would suggest a model of discerning worldviews that includes three primary components, a spiritual realm, the physical realm and the interaction between the spiritual and physical realms. This is what Hiebert refers to as the “synchronic model of worldviews” which helps a person to understand how people view the structure of the world (2008, 27; 1994, 44). Clifford Geertz makes a distinction between a “model *of* reality” and a “model *for* reality” where the former “model of reality” functions “to express their structure in synoptic form – as to render them apprehensible” (1973, 93). The worldview models below are “synoptic form” to allow us to see large components in people’s worldviews and make comparisons.⁴

The first component of this synchronic model is the spiritual realm indicating the nature of the supernatural aspect of one’s perception of reality. The spiritual realm may be perceived to include spiritual beings, not exist at all, limited in involvement with the physical world, or highly interactive with the physical world.

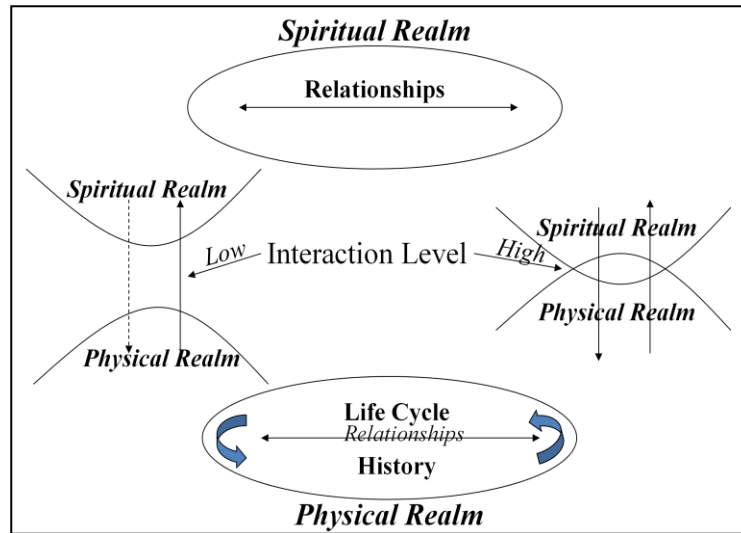
The physical realm is the second component and is associated with the realm of human life as perceived in life before death. It deals with the nature of humans, life cycles, causality, history, and epistemology.

⁴ Marguerite Kraft utilizes a illustrative model of the worldview of the Kamwə people (1978, 14).

The third component consists of the interaction between the spiritual and physical realms. This indicates the level of interaction between the two realms, whether it is limited, highly interactive or has no interaction. This interaction between the physical and spiritual realms points to the final position of a person with the “ultimate” or the ultimate goal of the belief system. “Ultimate” is defined as a spiritual being or power. It may also refer to the final goal beyond the physical experience. The ultimate may be relational as in Christianity’s perception of God or non-relational as in Theravada Buddhism’s ultimate search for finding Nirvana.

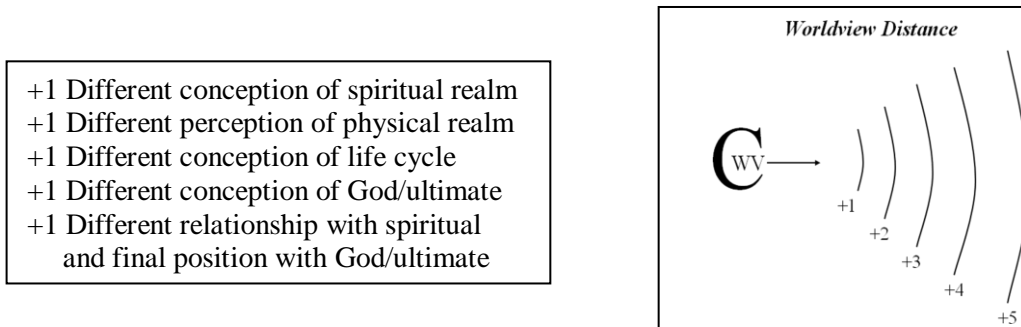
The simplified illustrative models offered below are meant to help visualize these three aspects of a worldview to provide a broad comparison between differing worldviews. By developing these models, they assist us in discerning the worldview distance and conceptualizing core perceptions of reality that impact contextualization. The models also allow further discussion into what is entailed in each of the categories and the relationship between them while comparing differing worldviews. Diagram 1 below illustrates the spiritual and physical realms with the various levels of interaction, high or low, indicated by the amount of overlap between the two realms. The vertical arrows indicate directions of interaction between the spiritual and physical realms while a dashed line indicates a very limited interaction going the direction indicated. Relationships and beings in the spiritual realm may be compared as well as people’s perceptions of a life cycle and history, whether cyclical or linear. The horizontal and curved arrows in the physical realm indicate the nature of the perceived life cycle whether linear as in the case of a secular worldview or circular as in Buddhism’s belief system.

Diagram 1
Three Elements in Worldview



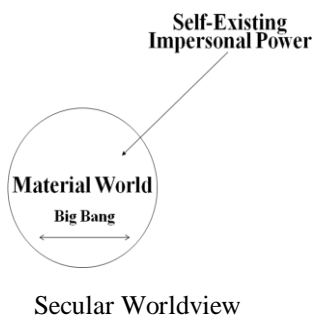
Five core perceptions have been selected as key elements in understanding broad worldview perceptions and distance (Diagram 2). These are: 1. conception of the spiritual realm, 2. perception of the physical realm, 3. life cycle, 4. God/ultimate, and 5. relationship with the spiritual and final position with God or the ultimate. This distance can be visualized with the graphic below. Discerning the worldview distance in this way allows mission personnel to identify major areas of worldview they share with a people group as well as worldview differences that will impact ministry directions. Worldview distance can be pictured with a scale of +1 to +5 indicating the degree to which a worldview differs from a Christian worldview.

Diagram 2
Discerning Worldview Distance

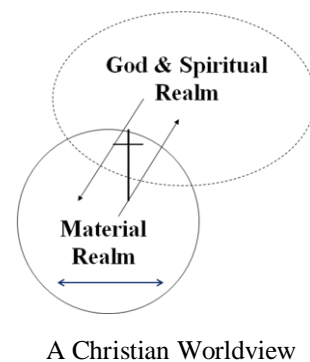


If we compare two worldviews prevalent in the West (Diagram 3), the secular and the Christian worldviews, both perceive the physical realm of matter as real with a linear life cycle. Although both worldviews share a common perception of physical existence, the secular worldview excludes the reality of a spiritual realm, excludes a conception of God or an ultimate outside the physical world, and therefore negates any relationship with the spiritual or final position of human beings with God or an ultimate. A Christian worldview accepts the existence of a real and active spiritual realm with a relational God who interacts with the physical realm and a physical realm that can relate to the spiritual. The overlap between the physical realm and the spiritual indicates a relational association between the two realms. It also indicates the source of the physical realm and the source of guidance for humanity. Theologically the incarnation is the ultimate indication of God's involvement in the world in the Christian worldview. The two directional arrows indicate that humanity has access to the spiritual realm and the spiritual realm communicates with the physical. When using these models with my students, we discuss both the validity of the level of world distance and the implications of the distance for ministry. The two models in the diagram below illustrate a worldview distance of +3.

Diagram 3
 Secular and Christian Worldviews

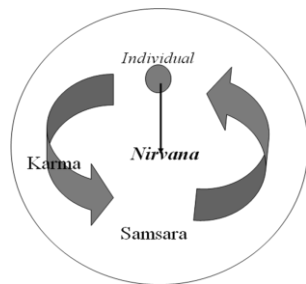


- +1 Different conception of spiritual realm
- +1 Different conception of God/ultimate
- +1 Different relationship with spiritual and final position with God/ultimate
- +3 *Worldview Distance*



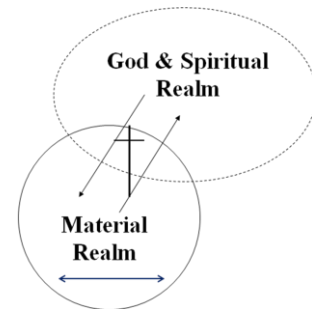
In comparing the Christian worldview with a substantially different worldview such as Theravada Buddhism, as seen in Diagram 4 below, the points of differentiation would be significant. The two illustrative models would indicate a +5 worldview distance. Theravada Buddhism does not recognize a spiritual realm. The physical realm is “*maya*,” indicating non-reality or mental creation. The life cycle is circular, *samsara*, as opposed to linear. There is no God, and there is no relationship between the spiritual and physical realms. The differences between the two also indicate that the belief systems are seeking different goals, i.e. Nirvana or Heaven.

Diagram 4
Theravada Buddhism and
Christian Worldviews



Theravada Buddhism Worldview

- +1 Different conception of spiritual realm
- +1 Different perception of physical realm
- +1 Different conception of life cycle
- +1 Different conception of God/ultimate
- +1 Different relationship with spiritual and final position with God/ultimate
- +5 Worldview Distance**



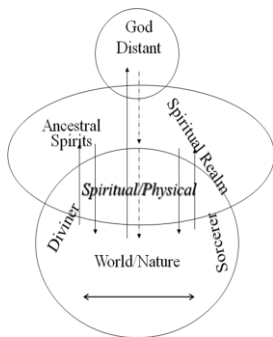
A Christian Worldview

Visualizing the worldview distance in this way helps one to identify at least five core perceptions that can raise substantial challenges to communicating the gospel in a context that is primarily influenced by this type of Buddhism. Mahayana Buddhism, depending on its type, might have fewer differences. Identifying these perceptions also allows a person to delve deeper into each one and look at the underlying assumptions that give rise to these perceptions, thus allowing for comparison to the Christian perspective.

Other worldviews will provide a mix of commonalities in worldviews with some distinctions. I will use a traditional African people group worldview to illustrate a worldview

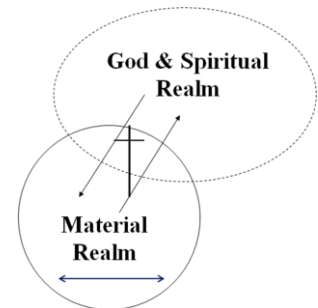
that has this mix (Diagram 5). The Meru worldview has a spiritual realm, but God is distant with little interaction with people while people have some access to God through sacrifices. There is a great amount of interaction between the spiritual realm of ancestral spirits and people in the physical world. Here the differences and similarities may become murkier as one wrestles with where to draw the line on certain categories. I find that my students are fairly comfortable with the differences in the worldviews but less so with the commonalities, specifically whether the Meru perception of God can be considered a commonality. Some would argue for a +3 worldview distance because they think the perception of God is significantly different.

Diagram 5
Meru and Christian Worldview



Meru Worldview

- | |
|--|
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> +1 Different conception of spiritual realm +1 Different relationship with spiritual and final position with God/ultimate +2 Worldview Distance OR +1 Different conception of God/ultimate +3 Worldview Distance |
|--|



A Christian Worldview

Here is where the teaching potential of illustrating the worldview distance can be helpful. I argue from a contextual perspective that the traditional understanding of God, *Murungu*, is close enough to the God of the Bible given the characteristics the Meru attribute to Him and recognizing at the same time that there is significant theological content still to be learned from the Bible, much like Moses had to fill in the theological content for the Israelites who were happy to accept Aaron’s proclamation of the golden calf as the “god who brought you out of Egypt.” Certainly Aaron and the Israelites had a long spiritual journey

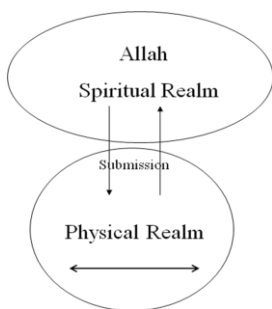
ahead. The giving of the laws and forty years in the wilderness followed in which they matured in their understanding of Yahweh's will and received a deeper understanding of the one true God.

To make the decision on whether *Murungu* should be considered as similar to the Christian worldview or not, we explore further the concept of God among the Meru. This helps to develop skills in exegeting culture, to use Hiebert's phrase, from the process of critical contextualization (1994, 88). A deeper exploration of who *Murungu* is in the perception of the Meru becomes necessary. In exegeting the Meru culture, one finds that *Murungu* means "Divinity" or "God." Also, *Murungu* is described as *Mwene Inya* (Owner of Strength, i.e. God Almighty), *Mumbi* (Creator God), and *Murungu Njeru* (God of Holiness; lit. "blackness"), all of which share similar conceptual descriptions of God in scripture. Given these conceptions of *Murungu* one must consider whether the Meru perception of God would be considered a substantially different concept of God. This exercise shows the importance of deep cultural studies to discern cultural elements and worldview differences. Discerning worldview distance functions as a tool to help cross-cultural workers identify distinctions while allowing for discussion on the validity of those distinctions and the need for deeper cultural knowledge to fully understand a people's worldview in any one category, much less sub-categories under those.

Discerning worldview distance becomes more problematic with religious perspectives that share common theological themes such as Judaism and Islam. The worldview distances are more nuanced and do not lend themselves to the illustrative models as well. However, I do believe they can be used to discuss shared conceptions and differences that may be very apparent while others may be less so.

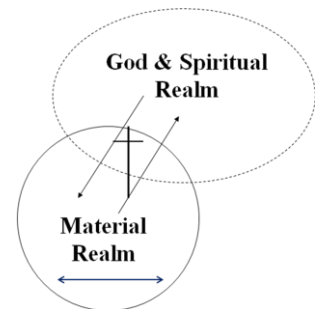
The worldview distance between Islam and Christianity is more difficult to discern in these illustrative models in that one could argue that both believe in heaven or hell as the ultimate outcome while realizing the conception of heaven may be different to some degree (Diagram 6). Both share a common perception of the physical realm as real and under the control of one God. Both views share the view of a linear life cycle from creation to judgment day. Both perceive one God who is sovereign, yet there are differences in God's relational attributes with humanity, His immanence, and the concept of the Trinity, all of which raise issues on the perception of God and Allah. The difference between the understanding of God's interaction with His creation may be the most glaring difference with Christianity viewing God's incarnation as the centerpiece of His involvement and relational nature with humanity along with the work of the Holy Spirit. In Islam God is described and seen as more transcendent in regards to His relationship with humanity. Below is an attempt to illustrate the worldview distance between Christianity and orthodox Islam.

Diagram 6
Christian and Islam Worldviews



Islam Worldview

+1 Different relationship with spiritual and final position with God/ultimate
 +1 *Worldview Distance*
 OR
 +1 Different conception of God/ultimate
 +1 Different conception of spiritual realm
 +3 *Worldview Distance*



A Christian Worldview

I have chosen a +1 worldview distance in the figure above. Others might argue for a +2 or even a +3 difference because of the differences between the Christian conception of

God or the spiritual realm in contrast to Islam's conception. One of my Muslim students felt this was reflective of Islam, though she thought the physical and the spiritual realms should be moved closer. It is in just this way that the models allow for discussion over what constitutes a significant difference. At minimum, it provides an illustrative model that facilitates conversations about belief systems and worldviews.

Conclusion

Discerning worldview distance in working cross-culturally or even within a pluralistic society of varying worldviews helps one to recognize significant differences while acknowledging shared perceptions of the world. Kraft notes a number of reasons for studying a people's worldview. Among these, studying worldviews helps us to understand people with whom we interact and share the gospel beyond a surface level drawn from their actions. It also helps Christians to understand their own worldview and the influence of their own culture.

Kraft's last four reasons are particularly applicable as they reinforce the reasons for discerning worldview distances between one's Christian worldview and a people group's worldview. First, "the basic cognitive underpinnings of Christianity are matters of worldview springing from our faith, not simply of surface-level religion." Beyond the cognitive, one might add what Hiebert calls the "evaluative" and "affective" aspects of worldview (Hiebert 2008, 25-26). Second, there is a need to "understand the relationships of Christianity to a person/group's worldview." Third, an understanding of "cause/power and person/group are especially important for Christians to probe." Generally, this area explores the spiritual realm aspect of the illustrative models and the associated power's interaction

with the physical realm. Fourth, “worldviews can be changed but seldom (if ever) exchanged or replaced” (2008, 23-28). Discerning worldview distance is helpful in visualizing a level of change that may be necessary to move to a Christian worldview.

Discerning worldview distance through recognizing differences between worldviews in three major components, i.e. the spiritual realm, the physical realm, and the relationship between the two, assists cross-cultural missionaries to visualize worldview distance from their own Christian worldview. The components also lend themselves to further discussion as to the significance of the differences in each one and how important those differences are when compared to a Christian worldview. Conceptualizing worldview distance in this way indicates the greater the distance, the more diverse and complex the issues of communicating the gospel and, therefore, the greater the change that is being asked of those who embrace Christianity. However, even where worldview distance is not great but the Christian worldview shares the majority of the five core perceptions, there may be very complex issues to bridge. Paul Hiebert’s concluding words in his work *Transforming Worldviews* are apt here.

As Christians we live in the world, but we are not to be of the world. We are those transformed by the power of the gospel to show to the world a new worldview, one that brings about eternal salvation and manifests itself in love, joy, peace, gentleness, and witness. We are not called to fight the world or to flee from it. We are to be like salt and yeast, bringing about transformation in the world. . . . We are to live as a countercultural community and as individuals in the world, exemplifying Christlikeness in our lives as individuals and as communities of Christ’s disciples. (2008, 333)

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