

Andrews University
Leadership Program

MY CHRISTIAN WORLDVIEW:
WE MUST ACT BASED ON KNOWLEDGE; THE EPISTEMOLOGY
OF WHAT IS REAL

In Partial Fulfillment
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LEAD 636 Issues in Leadership Foundations

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CHAPTER I

GENERAL INTRODUCTION TO WORLDVIEWS; A JOURNEY SHAPING PHILOSOPHICAL FOUNDATIONS THROUGH KNOWLEDGE

Why do we think the way we do? Do we behave according to what we believe? How do we acquire knowledge, our philosophy in life and our decision making rubric? A worldview, says Olthuis (1985), is 'a framework or set of fundamental beliefs through which we view the world and our calling and future in it'. Education, Family, friends, religion, music and sports have determined my worldview as a leader. While defining my Philosophical Foundations and worldview, I will describe how, when and why this philosophy and beliefs have changed over the years as I gained knowledge.

In the beginning of the class LEAD 636 Issues in Leadership Foundations, we were asked to define our worldview based on our beliefs. These are my basic beliefs;

1. The formula to succeed professionally in life involves God's blessing, determination, resiliency and time management.
2. Formal education and degrees are not enough. Experience is not enough. Natural talents and skills are not enough. We need a combination of all of them under the umbrella of humbleness to accomplish our dreams.
3. True leadership resides in helping others become successful in what they do, especially if that makes them better than us.

4. The ingredient needed to fully understand love is to make the loved ones happy by sacrificing our own interests, to the extreme of being willing to die for them (I experienced that with my daughter and my wife)
5. The significance of our existence is directly proportional to our belief in eternal life, and based on that, we will leave a legacy or not.
6. Family, friends, music, traveling, food, sports (especially golf), good coffee, a good night of sleep and a sunset while on a cruise are just some of the gifts from God to remind us that life is worth living.
7. Learning will never end. Knowledge will be developed eternally

Introduction; My worldview as a Story

The reason behind my actions is the knowledge of a God revealed in a manner similar to what Wilkens & Sanford (2009) describe as a belief. These beliefs are more narrative, not merely a set of propositions to be read and forgotten. They give meaning to my decisions because they are more than just a theory or someone else's philosophy. My story is an ongoing transformational model, based on Wilkens & Sanford (2009), shaping my identity based on convictions, values, ethics and moral actions. That is why I considered the experience of integrating faith in my worldview, strongly influenced by relationships with mentors, peers, and Jesus, my Master and guide to face daily

challenges. But why the need of a story, a narrative of my experience and not just theorize?

Experience, says Wilkens & Sanford (2009) is often related to individual feelings when developing a worldview. Furthermore, the authors go on to claim that for a narrative of a personal story to be authoritative at all and accepted as true, it needs to be consistent with evidences, reflection and actual life events. Consequently, in my Christian worldview, experience, Scripture and reason are complementary when seeking integrity and honesty while developing a true worldview. My personal experiences made me who I am today.

Personal Experiences Developing my Worldview

It all started with a strong influence from my parents growing up in an Adventist family, as well as from teachers at school and what we learned at Sabbath school in church. Jesus, as the human version of God, was everything to me. Through the stories of his miracles to his second coming and his constant companionship in everything I did every day, He was my friend. I had a relationship with Him and I believed He was real and that He could solve any of my problems and be there for me when I was happy and when I was having a bad day. But my problems where small.

All of that changed once I started high school. The countries we lived in were going through military dictatorships and several of my friends lost their parents or someone they knew whom governments that would not tolerate any criticism tortured and

killed. That utopia of a perfect world created by a loving God soon disappeared and all of a sudden other worldviews became more real to me. First postmodernism, with the concept of a God who started everything good but who later died, according to Nietzsche, (Fritzsche, 2013) and that perhaps we were even responsible of killing Him. I also I developed a temporary worldview of Nihilism, genealogically related to postmodernism, from a dead God to a concept of nothingness (Cunningham, 2002). No more need of a God, a purpose in life, no more hope in a brighter future or better times to come. Just complete absence of everything. It was a hard and sad chapter of my life. And being in several Adventist boarding schools where the sons and daughters of rich parents could break the rules without the same consequences of the rest of the students because of their parents' donations did not help me to change that lack of faith in God and in a religious organization following His teachings. God appeared to be definitely dead. Nothing really mattered, like the song Bohemian Rhapsody from Queen talks about (It was one of my favorite songs back then).

Additionally, when I lived in Uruguay, I was influenced by certain facets of Deism, from the point of view of Voltaire, where reason is the key to understand divinity instead of the Bible (Sire, 2009) from several friends and even church members. The environment around me was strongly catholic, mostly from France, for whom the reason prevailed over traditions and common teachings. Just months after I started realizing these new contradicting concepts of human reason versus the revelation through scripture

that were bringing confusion to my young mind, the Falkland Islands war occurred in 1982, where more of my friends' fathers and older brothers lost their lives. That entire beautiful dream I had in my heart and my mind of a loving God who wants the best for us and who is constantly seeking our wellbeing just became a big lie. Pastors and priests also mysteriously disappeared and were never found again because they conducted public religious meetings during that time every week, causing my mom, my sisters and myself constant pain and uncertainty every time my dad had to go visit one of his more than 10 churches in different states preaching a message of love that for some military leaders considered in direct opposition to what they were trying to teach the population. I stopped believing God existed, I also thought he was probably dead, and I did not even heard at that time of Nietzsche's postmodern story about the possibility that God was dead and that we may have something to do with that, according to Fritzsche (2013). I still had my hopes up, but without wanting to have anything to do with any religion. My monotheistic Christian worldview was almost forgotten, and reading the book "The great Controversy" (White, 1911) for a class I had to take, somehow helped me to understand the real conflict between good and evil. However, all the stories in the book about how the Christian Catholic church profited from the gospel and manipulated history through political power, instead of making me feel confident just ignited more anger. Why so much killing in the name of God? How could I keep my Christian worldview after that?

Ultimately, Christians killed each other in the name of God since biblical times, and the Cristian Catholic church has been involved in Crusades and later during WWII financing Hitler and Mussolini, says Godman, (2004) in his book *Hitler and the Vatican: inside the secret archives that reveal the new story of the Nazis and the church*. They also provided new identities for Nazi leaders to go to Canada, Brazil, Argentina and Mexico, among other countries, based on personal testimonies of friends, neighbors and family members who saw them and heard directly from them how they received help from Pope Pius XII, who was openly anti-Semitic, claiming responsibility of the persecution of Jews says Godman (2004). How could I hold my Christian worldview after all that? On top of all these controversies, I started to understand all the politics of my own denomination, where pastors and administrators lobbied for years in order to be elected, choosing friends and relatives to occupy leadership positions in churches, hospitals, publishing organizations, universities, and other offices.

That is probably when I became a postmodern coach for a while, according to Sire, (2009) not believing what others told me I had to believe, just doing my best to help students to stay in school, keep their promises, be respectful with those they needed something from, and staying healthy utilizing sports and Physical Education. All metanarratives were not credible to me, except those validated by the community (Sire, 2009) that lived by them, and I promoted free thinking in my student-athletes somehow

against the status quo that was pushing to accept everything the way it was taught for centuries from a more conservative sector of religious traditions.

Only after my daughter was born, when I had to work three jobs just to pay tuition, food and basic bills, I felt there was a different Divine power, God, that had a purpose for my life. I started to remember again all the teachings of my mom and my dad about the purpose of God for each human being. Jesus had to escape Egypt, Moses was sold as a slave, as well as Daniel and his friends, David was persecuted for years, and Elijah had to flee to stay alive. They all had to wait to start their ministry, and they all had to go through very tough life experiences to understand their call. Since that day nothing has been easy. I had days and months of struggles and doubts of my calling to serve others from whom I believe is called Jesus, God, Jehovah, the Great I AM, and with many more names, by time after time, through pain and joy, through poverty and abundance, I continue to see how God has a plan for all of us, regardless of our talents.

In this journey of shaping an honest worldview coherent with personal experiences and beliefs, Wilkens & Sanford (2009) answered several questions I had about the overlapping between the language, aims and practices of my Christian monotheistic worldview in a secular world. Why Christian monotheistic? Monotheism, according to Valk (2011) includes three monotheistic sub-types; Judaism, Christianity and Muslim. All three believe in a monotheistic God, even though they also have further divisions in their beliefs and practices. A monotheistic Christian worldview accepts

Christ as God, as the Creator of the universe, scriptures revelator, savior and personally responsible for the redemption of the sinful human nature, as well as provider of eternal life after death as a result of accepting Him as a savior and redeemer (Valk, 2011).

Why is it then that I suffered the apparent absence of this loving God in the world I was living and in the organizations I was a part of? “My people are destroyed for lack of knowledge: because thou hast rejected knowledge, I will also reject thee...”, said Hoseah in chapter 4, verse 6, along with Isaiah’s message in chapter 5, verse 13; “therefore My people go into exile for their lack of knowledge; And their honorable men are famished, and their multitude is parched with thirst”.

Moreover, as a monotheistic Christian, I realized that the hurdle between salvation and me was ignorance and a lack of experience based on the knowledge of Him. I believed that I was created in God’s image, and that there was power from God to be used to help others when we get to know Him in a personal level through meditation in His life, message and purpose instead of trying to find divinity within ourselves. These concepts were apparently confusing, but after sharing talks, reading books and watching several movies and TV shows, it was easy for me to see where I may have get lost. I succumbed to a mix of individualism, based on Wilkens & Sanford (2009), where my only goal was to become financially successful; also materialism got ahold of me, (Wilkens & Sanford, 2009), as a degenerated version of consumerism from enjoying God’s creation to believe that accumulating wealth will bring fulfillment in life, and

finally narcissism, (Lasch, 1991), living and celebrating the moment with behaviors that contradicted personal moral values without thinking in future consequences, just in a pursue of pleasure.

How could I then be consistent with my beliefs if several contradicting events were taking place in my life? Jesus promised in John 14:12 “Truly, truly, I say to you, whoever believes in me will also do the works that I do; and greater works than these will he do, because I am going.” I thought then that based on this promise, I should be able to perform miracles, become a channel for divine power to heal and transform this world while at the same time experience a personal salvation. But I was ignorant, I did not want to know our Savior deeper and grow in faith by sacrificing my selfish individual accomplishments, possessions, reputation and comfort.

Was there any hope for me? How could I accomplish the purpose of my existence? I needed to become an instrument of the real divine source of power, by increasing my knowledge of science, philosophy, history, different cultures and traditions, but not necessarily adopting them as a way of life. What do I mean by that? It is good to study and learn about other worldviews and beliefs from all over the world in order to understand them better when sharing the journey of life. That is why my worldview and epistemology has changed with this class, becoming more accepting and understanding of others. The example of Dr. Freed and Dr. Mark Finley also probed with their personal testimony that God is divine, that I am a created being just inferior to

angels, potentially recipient of incredible powers if I willingly allow God, to use me to help others in a secular world where through distractions we may be doomed because of a lack of divine knowledge.

How the information provided in this class will confirm or change these basic beliefs? Is my Christian monotheistic worldview of a God, Creator, Savior and soon to come back as a King to give me eternal life going to change? Our first approach to define some of the factors that shape our worldview was from education, its purpose and the definition of knowledge.

Defining Knowledge

What is Knowledge? Is it just a conglomeration of facts, information, and skills acquired by a person through experience or education? Is knowledge justified true belief?, asks Turry (2012). The theoretical or practical understanding of a subject? What is known in a particular field or in total? Is it what philosophically may be considered true, a justified belief, a certain understanding, as opposed to opinion? Or is it just awareness or familiarity gained by experience of a fact or situation? All these definitions found from different perspectives may encompass the meaning of other words like awareness and cognition that etymologically involve learning.

Moreover, awareness and cognition are synonyms of knowledge. Thus, several factors involved in the process of gaining knowledge may include; information received in the form of meaningful data, learning experiences influenced by interventions,

surrounding environment and the subsequent behavioral changes linked to social cognitive development in individuals and organizations, says Fiske & Taylor (2013).

Therefore, how knowledge could shape the worldview and core values of a person or an entity? The information-processing capacity of humans and organizations in a social environment, argues Wyer & Srull (2014), often determines actions and reactions related to the cognitive growth process. That is why I am in this program and why this class means so much to me. I want to learn how to use knowledge to lead, to change, to grow, to be surprised. I believe real growth comes from trial and error; disagreements and new trends that challenge what we accept as the only truth. Is it formal education the only and best way to learn?

Formal Education and Philosophical Theories

Knight, (2006) argues that schools are only one among many agents for learning, education and training. If parents, churches and peers could own more responsibility nowadays toward the development of individuals toward success instead of the media, the reality for schools, academies and universities would be probably less important. I experienced in my life some of the traditional philosophies in education that Knight (2006) consider responsible for our contemporary educational theories. Idealism at the forefront, with an emphases on the immaterial reality of ideas. These thoughts contradict a realistic materialism where matter is real and financial as well as social

accomplishments and failures go beyond mere abstract ideas, according to Strawson (2015).

I compare idealism with wishful thinking and realism with critical thinking. When it comes to the environment as well as world peace, world hunger, world education and religious differences, humans may think of a reality that only exists in their minds as an idealistic positive truth through wishful thinking. On the contrary, realistic knowledge of an urgent need for change based on what our senses tell us when we see, touch, smell, hear and taste the reality of our world, may set the course for critical thinking processes that will promote an strategic plan to improve our world reality. Fink-Samnack (2011) explains the way we conduct our leadership responsibilities by quoting Lena Torne who said; “It's not the load that breaks us down; it's the way we carry it.” Moreover, as leaders, we have experienced situations of denial when crisis arrives around us, either from co-workers, superiors or from those we lead.

This is what I try to teach my students every day; we need to have a worldview and a strong set of beliefs from ideals to reality. Starting with our spiritual knowledge, and at the same time, admit that many times we need to hold our judgmental idealistic nature when we relate with others and also when we see ourselves above or below who we really are.

Conclusion; The Purpose of Education; a Source of Knowledge While Constructing a Worldview

What is the purpose of education? Education may be the strongest influential factor in human development, according to Chengcheng (2011), both social-based and individual-based. However, the most effective method and structure vary from different persons, systems, countries and continents. Some judge its effectiveness based on the job it earns and the financial success that follows, says Steinbacher, (2012). Bob Compton, in his documentary 2 million minutes, compares students from different countries and considers that Math and Science are the most important subjects students should be learning. Nevertheless, in Plato's "Allegory of the Cave" we find that there are other values to be gained through other educational processes that are not necessarily related to standardized testing and rigid systems. That is the main reason why I am currently in this Leadership program; because I consider the purpose of education to improve, enhance and ignite the passion and talents of a person, with a deep sense of service for others. Why is education required in most countries of the world? I think there are several reasons.

First, because of a competitive global economy, where visionary leaders support education in order to improve the wellbeing of their citizens to become financially and socially successful. Zhao, (2012) in his book *World class learners: Educating creative*

and entrepreneurial students also advocates for students to get ready for today's challenges. Even non-profit organizations need resources to be able to function.

Second, because of religious reasons. There are countries that use education and the lack of it as a government tool to control the mindset of their citizens, as well as the economy, the media, and the philosophical trends of their nations (Birbir & Satana, 2013)

Third, some countries in Europe also utilize education to train their citizens for different levels of professions, including manual labor as well as other job opportunities that require more than just the general subjects knowledge, according to Brockmann, Clarke, & Winch, (2011) in their book *Knowledge, skills and competence in the European labour market: what's in a vocational qualification?*

Fourth, based on Machin, Marie and Vujic (2011) to control and reduce crime. This trend has been seen in Europe, North America and Asia. Being enrolled in school, academy or university level institutions can keep citizens, especially young people, out of trouble, says Anderson (2014).

In other words, even though schooling appears to be a small part of life experiences, it may be the glue that keeps training, education and learning together. As a student embarking now in his 23rd year of formal education, in 3 different continents, around 12 countries and different languages and cultures, I can share some of the reasons why 'schooling' may be so important. Each teacher, school, university and educational system can bring innovation and change if as a student one is willing to keep the

questions alive. Knight (2006) argues that questions in philosophy are more important than answers. That to me is probably the key answer to why learning in a practical environment is not enough, why formal education as we know it is not enough, and training alone is not enough either.

Moreover, Gladwell (2008), suggests that success may be obtained with his '10,000 hours' rule, where some specific training in areas like technology, music, sports and many others apply. This rule, he says, is based not only on innate talent, which is needed for success, but also in literally thousands of hours of training with the proper information, education and learning environment.

The Christian Education Perspective that Knight (2006) refers to makes a difference, and to me that is the final purpose of education; getting ready to go to our home in heaven but meanwhile, heavily recruiting others in the process. That is something I really liked when I met several faculty members in the Leadership program, servant leaders who seek to mentor other leaders to become effective instruments for our world and heaven.

CHAPTER II

WORLDVIEWS AND KNOWLEDGE INFLUENCED BY SEQUENTIAL PHILOSOPHICAL MOVEMENTS

Introduction: Connecting With Hidden Worldviews

The pursue of understanding and knowledge of the following philosophical worldviews, sequentially helped me to define my own. Based on their historical, religious, social, and political origins, these worldviews connected concepts and theories of my narrative and current Christian worldview. I have experienced strong agreements and disagreements with several of their claims for years without even knowing it, they were somewhat hidden, according to Wilkens & Stanford (2009) in the environment I was exposed to. The philosophies I found related to my story will be briefly and sequentially explained in the section below.

Postmodernism; Developing a Worldview as a Reaction to Traditions and Empty Messages of the Past

The postmodern philosophy had a strong negative impact in my teenage years, when I was seeking for the meaning of life, the future, death, God and my reality with a rebellious-like attitude. Like many other viewpoints, postmodernism is a reaction to a previous idea, in this case the out-of-touch message of modernism, argues Milovanovic, D. (2013), especially when it comes to religion. I just could not accept in my early teen years what was theoretically normal, good, traditional, established. I developed some of

those feelings from some great teachers I had, especially from the public school I went to my sophomore year in high school. That is when I openly shared my big questions about what was reality to me, with a history teacher that was not a Christian. He also taught philosophy, so he saw me as a potential recruit for his beliefs, and I somehow fell for it. He definitely believed in what David Hume (1711-1776) said about cause and effect when we want to know the external world, as well as Immanuel Kant (1724-1804) and his explanations on how our minds produce our reality, according to Knight (2006).

I connected immediately with Postmodernism since this may be the greatest idealistic product not just of philosophers, says Knight, (2006), but of other fields like art, literature and architecture. Historically, I learned that humans tried to explain, understand and gain knowledge in depth of the external world and as a result of that, be able to control it. From David Hume (1711-1776) who tried to explain the cause and effect of human abilities to knowing the world how we discern it, through Immanuel Kant (1724-1804) who ended up frustrated after acknowledging that our mind is a funny instrument when it comes to interpret reality, and finally Friedrich Nietzsche (1844-1900), who pretty much eradicated any foundation for beliefs, and as a result, knowledge, arguing that God the Creator started everything but is dead now, says Knight (2006).

Therefore, the social result of these philosophical ideas resulted in what is recognized as postmodern pragmatism, where knowledge is provisional in the face of 'human knowledge', especially for our society, not only individuals, argues Knight

(2006). These ideas erupted as an outcome of post war social deceptions, with most of my uncles and grandparents involved, with the world and the notion of a reality understood as the individual choice and freedom.

I was intrigued also with Friedrich Nietzsche and his post-modern theories of a dead God, (Fritzsche, 2013) a dead truth and his pragmatism when it came to religions. Until that day I only knew about Jesus, God, and what the Bible says about the past, the present and the future. This was all new to me, and I was angry at life for many reasons. So much hate, social injustice, wars (I lost several friends and family members in the Falkland Islands war as I mentioned earlier) as well as poverty and hypocrisy from those who were leading religious and educational organizations and government institutions. I just happened to read the Great Controversy (White, 1911) that year, so I was angry at my friends and neighbors' church, since they were all catholic, and what I read in that book certainly did not help the catholic church's reputation either.

Probably what change all this anger was what I read from Jean-Paul Sartre about becoming what-I-choose-to-be (Knight, 2006), and the fact that one week of prayer, the youth pastor who preached every night about becoming useful to others just happened to also be a lawyer and a philosopher...and on top of that an excellent soccer player. He changed my worldview when he explained how life was bigger than what I knew until then. We talked about philosophy, theology, soccer, sex, psychology and relationships.

Next year I was in the seminar and got my first degree in Theology 3 years later, then another two degrees in Music and Physical Education.

Constructivism; the Liberty of Choosing Constant Change

Later in my high school experience, I started to develop a constant changing worldview based on mixed messages from the books I read and the speeches of my teachers. I generally doubted what others said about what was really true, seeking freely other ways of understanding the fact that I was the result of a miracle, like every human being. In Constructivism as a theory, says Fosnot (2013), knowledge is not just a truth to be transmitted or discovered but a self-regulatory process of wrestling with the struggle between prevailing personal models of the world and discrepant new insights, which is why I feel very comfortable and identified with this theory. Always learning something new, something different, innovative and efficient. This may be one of the formulas for growth as a leader. The risk of this philosophy lays in the reality of a powerful enemy always seeding confusion and doubt about a loving, almighty Creator and Savior.

Individualism and the “American Dream”

After moving to the United States with my family in 2002, I experienced firsthand the effects of an individualistic society. Wilkens & Sanford (2009), state that individualism believes singular interests and goals should be pursued, as much as possible, with all of our strength. Moreover, striving for autonomy and self-sufficiency,

considering others around us as instruments helping us to achieve our goals, is a strong characteristic of Individualism.

When did I embrace this 'ism' and why? I think I started dreaming about living in North America since I have memory of being alive. My favorite uncle and aunt lived in Washington D.C. when I was a little boy, and they always talked about all the possibilities and fun activities they were constantly a part of. I still remember the pictures of the Grand Canyon and the slides we watched together from the Niagara Falls, Disneyland, Yosemite National Park, Hawaii and many other places. The churches here were huge, the choirs, bands and orchestras were amazing too. Most of my sports heroes lived and played in the US, even though I had to watch the games in black and white TV or follow them in the radio (AM). As I continued to grow up and had to decide about my major and later my graduate studies, the United States were and still are the best option for a youth leader, teacher, coach, sports fan and dreamer like me.

Therefore, it appears that we all feel at some point in our lives that we are the center of the universe, and that the lives of our parents, teachers, siblings and friends revolve around our own little world. My mom particularly made sure I knew I was special, that God had a purpose for my life, and that someday all this extra energy that I had when running around the church, was going to be used by Him for a good cause. Later on in life I discovered that it is true, we are special and Jesus would have died just for one person, but none of us is the center of the universe.

Individualistic thoughts of being better than others to the point of using them for our needs never felt right growing up in a sports environment. I had great coaches who developed in me the understanding of growth based on constant individual improvement with effort and not necessarily by proving my self-worth by being better than others after winning some games, tournaments or championships. It certainly felt good to win, but with a mindset of competing in order to have fun, grow healthy, and make new friends before the season started, losing did not hurt that much and I had the chance to learn from adversity.

Utilitarian Individualism: a Worldview Measuring Success Through Material Gain

The ‘Utilitarian Individualism’, says Wilkens & Sanford (2009), mainly defines individual achievement based on material success, and that this success automatically should fill the person socially. Big dreams! Hopes of success, fame, popularity, millions of dollars in earnings, happy friends and the recognition of family and society are a part of the ‘American Dream’ for people in the USA and around the world for those trying to come here. This trend also suggests that personal achievement and material success should automatically guaranteed the wellbeing of society. Utilitarian Individualism, says Wilkens & Sanford (2009) is deeply ingrained and supported by the ‘American Dream’ message we see every day on TV shows, movies, books, news report and sports. Individuals striving to prove themselves by working, studying and practicing long hours, days, months and years in order to grow.

Utilitarian Individualistic worldviews, (Wilkens & Sanford, 2009) tend to focus in personal achievement and financial success in sports as well as other areas. This worldview is deeply embedded in the “American Dream”, which can be a positive motivation to improve at the individual and organizational level, but in many cases, in order to reach what is considered success, many moral, social and spiritual laws get broken or ignored. This is the ignorance or “denial” that caused individuals, corporations, entire countries and even continents to continue accepting the wrong as right, the human way instead of God’s way, probably thinking that God is so forgiving and kind that we would not had to face the consequences of bad decisions.

These concepts were the igniting force for me as well as many others I know when we decided to come to America. We do believe in teamwork, in the power of our God and Savior to open the doors for us, but we also try our best to comply with the rules, regulations and laws of this country as well as our place of work and the universities we study. That is also a clear quality of utilitarian individuals who honestly fight and put the extra effort to overcome obstacles, challenges, limitations and achieve goals.

The problem found in some utilitarian individuals is the fact that many times they claim to do things sacrificially and publicly positive in order to gain personal recognition, just like the Pharisees used to behave. I have seen it in volunteers as well as people being paid to serve others who used the accomplishments not to truly help others, but to make

others aware of their good deeds. When my end justifies my means, and I deflect the real purpose of a servant leader in order to gain individual and public recognition by cutting corners in my actions, I become an ‘Idiot’, based on the story told by Wilkens & Sanford (2009). Moreover, some take advantage of others and ignore their needs in order to make a profit and get ahead in life, no matter how questionable their utilitarian individual behavior may become. That is the danger of utilitarian individualism, when we lose sight of our purpose and mission and just utilize situations, people, even God to achieve selfish self-centered narcissistic goals.

Moreover, utilitarian individualism does not reject structures and the social rules, instead it believes in rules as guidelines to achieve individual success. On the contrary, ‘Expressive Individualism’, claims Wilkens & Sanford (2009) resists and challenges conventional beliefs and social regulations. A strong desire of ‘freedom’ from rigid parameters ignites expressive individualism to rebel against these regulations, considering them as obstacles. However, the positive side of expressive individualism has allowed musicians, artists, athletes, coaches, teachers, theologians and even Jesus to show how some traditions and social rules not necessarily reveal God’s character.

The negative side of individualism for Christian leaders lies at the roots of individual good deeds in front of others in order to achieve personal benefit. One example mentioned in the Bible; the Pharisees, who made it their lives’ purpose to prove to their society how good they were based on individual acts of apparent sacrifice and

commitment. Somehow, they left a legacy of utilitarian and also expressive individualism when keeping old traditions and at the same time developing new traditions and customs that separated themselves from the rest of the society.

Interestingly, as a result of centuries of this fake spiritual as well as political servant leadership trend, today's individualistic impulse "comes out of profound disappointment with corporate institutions, religions, governments and financial corporations", argues Wilkens & Sanford (2009).

In other words, my worldview has deep beliefs in individual growth and achievements. The 'American Dream' is real for me and my family, socially, spiritually and academically. The United States of America as a country embraces hard working individuals who are willing to do their best to make a difference in this world for a better society. I also found a more personal God by finding challenges, obstacles and occasional failure. With the growth mindset that Dweck (2014) talks about, I became a better teacher, a better student, a better coach, father and husband. Change has to occur at an individual level, but always with the knowledge that a loving Father can use all of our individual victories and defeats to keep us close to Him, always willing to be used to serve others as the highest prove of success.

Scientific Naturalism; Can We Find All the Answers Through Science?

As a graduate student today, how can I scientifically probe love, salvation, hope, knowledge and sadness? Wilkens & Sanford (2009) argues that Scientific Naturalism,

also called reductive physicalism, scientism, or materialism, describes matter as the essence of the universe. Nothing exists except the material. This worldview brought some deep questions for neuroscience, says Sturm (2012), since we cannot explain consciousness in a physical way.

Moreover, the neuroscience of conscience, love, evil, reason, and knowledge struggles when facing Scientific Naturalism. How can we measure conscience, love, evil, reason and knowledge? Are they predictable based on some elemental material compositions? How do we define its physical existence, its atomic structure?

If we consider the conscious decisions related to love, evil, reason, the acquirement of knowledge, and try to find its atomic composition, we may end up contradicting ourselves with philosophical and scientific definitions. Moreover, if a non-physical reality does not exist, there is no room for a Creator who creates from love, to fight evil in a reasonable way and to transmit the knowledge needed to overcome the challenges in life.

Also, scientific naturalism utilizes multiple hypotheses related to “laws of nature” which are widely defined as questionable, argues Wilkens & Sanford (2009) lacking material composition and explanation, contradicting its core beliefs. Since everything is matter, scientific naturalism claims that even our moral choices are determined by these laws of nature which at the same time are not material. This contradiction continues when trying to assign science as the only form of solution and salvation for our problems,

assuming that through rational understandings and the use of these ‘unchanging’ laws of nature everything responds to what is real (matter) and true (the laws of cause and effect).

Personally, I can probe scientifically that my conscience of this world, my definitions of love, evil, reason and knowledge drastically changed when I held a little girl called Brenda, my daughter, seconds after she was born and started crying. The noise of a new life, the miracle of love becoming matter. That day I knew I had to live to protect her from evil, to help her grow and learn how to walk this life making her own decisions based on the knowledge of what is eternal love. I could not predict those feelings, emotions, fears, radical priority changes and what as of today has been the most beautiful journey a human being can dream of: parenthood.

Scientific Naturalism also had positive impression in my worldview in aspects related to the value of science, the importance of reason and the quest of seeking to solve human problems, which in fact has happened thousands of times when it comes to technological discoveries, medical solutions and other improvements for our daily life. However, the risk still exists, that the powerful technological advances have been used to save lives as well as to kill millions in the past and even today.

Polytheism and Spiritism; the Knowledge of Different Gods

When I teach, preach, coach and experience relationships with other denominations and credos today, I know why my Christian worldview is so important. Polytheism and spiritism believe in God present in matter found in nature, including

humans, and for Harvey, (2014) it may be the rise of modern paganism. They believe demons are present in matter as well, claims Staten, (2008).

These belief systems include many types or forms of religions. Individuals who believe in spiritism believe that gods and demons are the real reason behind natural events that occur, which several denominations believe too but from a different point of view. Another author that captivated my attention and fascinated my imagination was Anderson (2014), especially when he mentioned in the introduction the metaphor of a pair of spectacles with colored lenses that based on the color of the lenses, we see things in a whole different way, sometimes not seeing anything at all.

Throughout my life, while developing my worldview, the colors of these lenses have changed drastically, based on the environment I was, my parents, friends, teachers and mentors as well as personal experiences. These good and bad experiences with God, friends, family, church, governments, schools, jobs and my own maturation process of developing opinions and a worldview on matters of ethics and politics certainly related to what this book talks about.

However, I never doubted that there is just one God, conformed of three persons, that the Bible is the Word of this God I learned to love and mostly fear and not in a good way for quite some time, as well as accepting the Christian worldview of a personal friend and Savior.

I remember when we went to China and Japan and visited several temples and shrines and the tour guide told us that millions of people presented their offerings to more than one of those “gods”, hoping one of them was the true one, the one with the power to answer their prayers and help their needs.

Moreover, just like the Christian worldview struggles with the challenge of the origin of evil, I wrestled my entire life with the question about “why” bad and sad things happen. That is when I found out God has another “w” word for all my “whys” and that word is “wait”. I had to go through times of hard discovery of this true God, understand His times and recognize that when a door closes after prayer, it is an answer right there. There is another door somewhere else waiting to be opened. My worldview at this point is a mix of Christianity, Judaism and Deism (Anderson, 2014), but with some condiments from other worldviews too (Sire, 2009), since most of my biggest accomplishments came from accepting advice and a new perspective for change.

Therefore, I remain open to new concepts, not necessarily to accept them, but to learn from them, since a growth mindset is always better than a fixed one when it comes to acquiring knowledge, (Dweck, 2006).

How New Knowledge Directly Affected the Narrative of My Worldview

After gaining knowledge of several worldviews from the past and present society, I realized that one source useful for a journey shaping my own worldview was the book with the 7 questions posed by Sire (2009). There were several connections that I made

between what he said in his book, what I experienced in my life and what we are learning in this class about our worldview. The statement he made in chapter 1 (Sire, 2009) about the pluralistic world we live in, where everyone around us has a different worldview, and the reality that if we want to deny that we are certainly “naïve and provincial” (Sire, 2009) really connected with my worldview about all the answers for the 7 questions.

Worldview question 1. Prime reality, what is the nature of God? God is infinite, personal, transcendent, omniscient, sovereign and good. How do I agree with the statement that God is good? It took me almost 30 years to realize that.

Worldview question 2. The external reality; is God in everything? It is important to note that God did not make the universe out of himself, says Sire (2009). He created the universe as a way of sharing who He is, order, not chaos. He made our planet earth to be enjoyed and full of happiness.

Worldview question 3. A human being created in the image of God? My wife is really pretty; if this question has anything to do with good looks I am in trouble. But I know that God is more than just looks. I relate to this question because I always tell my students to consider how God made them unique, precious and full of potential. This process of growing mentally, spiritually and emotionally is eternal; learning will never end. That is one of my core beliefs.

Worldview question 4. What is the result of death? Sire (2009) argues that Christian theism teaches that we continue in a transformed existence in heaven or hell

after we die here on earth. I disagree with that statement based on what the Bible says in Ecclesiastes 9:5, as well as in 1 Corinthians 15:42-44, 52; 1 Thessalonians 4:16, 17; Revelation 20:4, clearly stating that we will be resurrected from death during the second coming of Jesus if we believed in Him and were chosen by Him to go to heaven. Those that rejected His teachings and salvation will stay here on earth for another 1000 years (Revelation 20:5). I had to sing in many funerals, and it is hard to see those who do not believe they will see their love ones again.

Worldview question 6. What is right and what is wrong? Morality coming from God contrasts with the one from Satan in the short and long term results. Does it bring happiness, health, joy, and peace? Where and how can we test if it is right or wrong? Is it only the Bible the source of answers to these questions? There are other sources that God used in my life. Of course the Bible is the most important, but He talked to me through my parents, my teachers, my wife and my daughter, as well as several coaches who are responsible for my strong belief in a loving God, in a life of service, and eternal fun.

World view question 7. Where are we going as humans, what is the purpose of humanity? We were made to reflect God's character, to worship Him with all of our might, to serve others in the process of redemption after sin entered this world. Forgiven, being justified, sanctified, and glorified very soon. That is the sweetest belief we can all have; the certainty that He will fulfill His promise of coming back for us.

Conclusion; Living a Christian Worldview Daily

Now, while we practice what we believe based on our knowledge as members of families and organizations; how these worldviews directly or indirectly influence the development of our own worldview? My daughter shared a musical metaphor that relates to life and organizations. She said “if we want to sing in harmony, we cannot all sing the same note”. Knowledge is the result of searching, studying, experiences and diversity.

From knowledge of different philosophies we develop beliefs, a worldview and a consequent lifestyle. Not following what I profess to believe is the opposite to integrity and honesty, says Wilkens & Stanford (2009). My Christian worldview results in the consistency of a lifestyle where following the advice of the Scriptures for daily decisions becomes natural and pleasant, not a burden. It takes training, deep reflection and the combination of reason, willpower and determination, since I see constantly in my life a struggle between what I know is good and what a sinful nature wants me to believe is good when it is not. That is why I rely on the promise of supernatural powers intervening in my decision making process day after day, minute after minute at home and at the workplace.

How do I transfer my personal Christian worldview to my daily responsibilities?

CHAPTER III

INFLUENCE OF WORLDVIEWS AND KNOWLEDGE IN ORGANIZATIONS

Introduction; How to Apply my Christian Worldview in the Workplace

When choosing the organization to serve professionally, I made sure I was going to be able to practice my worldview, as well as sharing with others openly how I got to gain the knowledge necessary to build such worldview through personal experiences. Moreover, I constantly seek to understand the needs and goals of the organizations I am a part of, procuring a synchrony with my worldview.

Now, the question arises about how important is it for organizations to provide a learning environment for its members to gain the necessary knowledge to develop their worldviews? What are the goals of most organizations? In an era of constant change, and since our American society has been mostly worried about the “how” instead of the “why”, says Knight (2006), it has been noticed how several learning environments, starting with schools, are more interested with motion than progress (Knight, 2006). This “motion mentality” utilizes numbers, percentages and test scores as final answers to questions that should be asked in places like a “roundtable” meeting among leaders, teachers, students and parents, especially when we are talking about comparative education and knowledge among schools.

Allowing participation of all members of the organization as well as an environment that fosters learning and the development of knowledge should be some of the core values for leaders trying to succeed, states Cummings & Worley (2009).

In other words, how communication and knowledge are efficient tools to enhance the chances of success for an organization? The goals of most organizations are usually related to efficiency, profitability/solvency, even for non-profit organizations, since if they do not find financial support and resources they cannot operate. All of them are result-oriented organizations that also cherish employee engagement/retention and customer satisfaction. The contributions and feedback from organization's members as well as customers/clients are the key factors for improvement, change, discussion, strategic planning, and innovative learning. Leaders who show how to become better communicators and ambassadors of knowledge are the reason why organizations and individuals can succeed.

Worldviews and Knowledge Related to What I Do; Health, Sports and Physical Education in a High School Setting

I work at Forest Lake Academy, in Florida. My Christian worldview is based in the knowledge of God and what He expects from me as a leader. This knowledge determines my decision making process about students, parents, members of the community and other schools we share activities with.

After reading what Knight (2006) says about the Metaphysics in Education, the reality of some Christian educational systems makes sense; we seek to serve all students and their families regardless of their current denominational membership and beliefs all over the world through our schools, academies and universities. We utilize our message of health and wellness through a balanced diet, exercise and other teachings from the Bible. But what is ultimately real when it comes to how we develop and promote the acquisition of knowledge through sports and physical activity in North America?. This basic question in Metaphysics brings us to a different educational reality in North America when we compare our system with others from different parts of the world that I had the chance to study and live.

Individualism is one of the core values taught in North America in schools and universities as well as in the media and the general concept of the “American dream” where with hard work and education most professional dreams and material success can come true, says Wilkens & Stanford, (2009) when explaining the “utilitarian Individualism”.

Sports and physical education as a way of academic success is becoming a very useful tool for educators, coaches and community leaders. After working for many years as a personal trainer, physical education teacher and coach, I have many examples of students of all levels who utilize sports and physical activity to spark their intellect.

Besides the studies from Ratey (2008) about the benefits of exercise on the brain, I also decided to interview several professionals as well as parents and school administrators to compare their worldview about the role of sports and physical activity in students overall performance and knowledge gain, as well as recruiting and retention outcomes and the fulfillment of the evangelistic mission of our church related to a reputable sports and physical activity programs. Schools, academies and Universities with strong sports and physical activity programs are currently succeeding and growing.

On the contrary, schools, academies and universities that are failing to grow and retain their students, do not fully support financially good sports programs of any kind (among other factors), therefore, they are struggling to stay open and many of them have been closing their doors for a lack of students and parents interested in their program. My Christian worldview inspires me to share with others the message of a better, healthier life, and I have experienced throughout the years the importance of sports and physical education as an efficient tool to reach young people. Competitiveness is not a bad thing when taught as a motivator for individual growth instead of a source of validity after probing temporary superiority in any given competition.

This past school year 2014-2015 at Forest Lake Academy, we had over 50% of our students engaged in new sports programs at Forest Lake Academy, especially the new freshman class that chose Forest Lake Academy among several excellent free public schools in the area. We have a record number of freshmen (120, compared to only 80

seniors), and the perspective of growth continues. I know it is not only because of sports and fitness options, there are other wonderful areas that we have improved too as a school in the last 3 years. We are also having a record number of participants in our Varsity, Junior Varsity and intramurals-recreational programs, where we pray before and after every practice and games, and where we strive to make Jesus and Heaven the main goal and award for being a part of this program. Winning is important, but our mission and vision are far from other goals from other schools. We want our students to be healthy, happy and grateful to our Creator for providing life, friends, family and activities where they can develop their God giving talents.

Sharing the Knowledge Through Servant Leadership and Evangelism

How do we enhance the knowledge students receive through sports programs while reaching out and serving others? Several studies have shown that education for many denominations has become an evangelical tool, more than just a training camp to inculcate doctrines, traditions and beliefs. In several countries around the world, Christian schools bring more new members to the church than all evangelistic crusades put together, states Arias (1991), since most of the students enrolled in these schools, are not members of the denominations these schools are a part of (Brazil, Argentina, Peru, Bolivia, etc., where the number of Adventist students is less than 20%). Even public schools teachers from a secular background, aim to change behaviors in their students,

argues Astley (2002), teaching them to adopt a particular attitude, values and of course, beliefs.

People do not attend evangelistic meetings, health seminars, etc. like they used to, and many members of our modern society do not engage in religious activities other than those offered by their own denomination. However, innovative educational methods like School sponsored Soccer camps (Tredway, 2006; Smither, 2011) and basketball camps (Paggit, 2012) are bringing more young students and later their families to get in touch with Christian denominations in Asia, Africa, South America and Europe than any other evangelistic strategy. I disagree with the idea mentioned last week in several posts that we should only look at Adventist education as a way to keep the message of the Bible for children of our own denomination. Christian schools have a mission to indoctrinate the students and prepare them to go to the world and share the good news of the gospel with others.

Furthermore, as a product of our sports and physical activity programs with a Christian philosophy, a vision and mission statement that puts winning records in second place after sportsmanship, honesty, teamwork and other biblical values, I can testify that what kept me and several of my friends as a member of the Adventist church goes beyond just the doctrines and beliefs class. On the contrary, because many schools resist the idea of having better sports and music programs, many opportunities to educate and share the learning journey from a Christian perspective is being wasted in several

conferences around the world. We keep closing more schools and academies than the ones we open in many places, where in other areas where educational leadership has a wider and progressive vision about sports and music, thousands of students and later their families are joining our schools and making our Adventist education family bigger and stronger.

**As a Graduate Student Today: the Leadership Program at Andrews
University as Knowledge Developer and Worldviews Promoter in my Life**

How can I experience the reality of God, (ontology, He is first) utilizing the knowledge (epistemology, second) I continue to acquire to serve others every day, while at the same time finding joy, happiness, success and the sense of fulfillment for my life?

The answer for these questions came when I found the Leadership Program at Andrews University. A program that is affirming my belief in the reality of a God who has a purpose for me, who wants me to grow intellectually, socially, spiritually and emotionally in order to serve others better. Freed, Covrig, & Baumgartner (2010) described all the elements I have been seeking since I was really young about a graduate program where God is the center, the reality, and where knowledge is acquired through an ongoing process of leading, reflecting, changing and building relationships to access resources. This program is strongly supported by a process where learning and experiential theories and reflections are a central part of all classes. Thus, it has

drastically eased the pain of my doubts and confusions about what is real, and what knowledge I need in order to become a better leader.

Knowledge, Leadership and my Worldview

What is the best option to implement this change when needed? We are learning in this class that drastic change is not necessarily the only solution to a problem when the current culture of an organization does not allow it. I experienced that at the organizational and personal level several times in my life. Leaders bringing change just to prove they have the power to do so, even going against the culture of an organization and individuals.

Ignorance, says Berry (2008), can cause failure, especially if we consider the scientific belief that we must act based on knowledge, the epistemology of what is real (ontology). Moreover, when change is forced using methods that bring fragmentation, frustration and sadness because of ignorance and wrong assumptions, the final outcome may be fatal. However, Berry (2008) goes on saying that we should assume our ignorance in order to seek knowledge and utilize the right methodologies, considering risks and possible mistakes. What do we know about how God brings change and how He expects us to be a part of it? Are there consequences if we do not act based on His advice? To what extent our ignorance is responsible for our failures? Or by the contrary, our knowledge of what is right should guide our decisions?

God himself said; “You didn’t think, did you, that just by pointing your finger at others you would distract me from seeing all your misdoings and from coming down on you hard? Or did you think that because he’s such a nice God, he’d let you off the hook? Better think this one through from the beginning. God is kind, but he’s not soft. In kindness he takes us firmly by the hand and leads us into a radical life-change.” (Romans 2:1-4).

An old tradition and custom in human history is blaming others for what we do wrong, or finding the “escape goat” when we fail individually or as a team/organization. We see that in sports a lot. Just one missed shot, pass, or kick, has brought entire states and countries to blame an individual for a loss, argues Sage (1987) when the reality always probes that “we win and lose as a team”.

My worldview strongly advocates for rewards and positive outcomes after hard work, determination, time management and God’s wisdom when growing professionally. However, I also believe that we have to do anything in our power to acknowledge for ourselves and for those we lead, that the consequences of blaming others for mistakes we make, as well as forcing change instead of improving the culture (knowledge of God) of the organization first, cannot bring success, peace, or growth.

Conclusion; We Must Act Based on Knowledge, the Epistemology of What is Real (Ontology)

In my core values and worldview I continue to believe that determination, time management and God's blessing are the secret formula for our professional growth. Praying and working hard every day to strength our skills and talents while also polishing our weaknesses with God's help and the guidance of others who know more than we do in those areas is not only a fun journey, but one where success is experienced day by day, moment by moment, and not judged by the media but by those who really know about real success and achievements. Salvation is individual and we ought to work every day to get better at it, acquiring new behaviors and getting rid of others that will keep us behind our final goal of a 'heavenly dream', where a crown and eternal life by the one who died for us, Jesus, represent the real individual success.

I still differ with how religious, political and even educational systems manipulate the masses just to prove each other right or wrong based on traditions and financial interests. I do not agree with all the philosophical human attempts trying to take God out of our lives and beliefs. In my worst and best moments, as well as during long stages of daily routines, I have felt this super natural power guiding my life, the lives of others and assuring me and my family that despite occasional failures and challenges, the victory has been already won. God is not dead. I have the knowledge of His presence, and I must act and behave accordingly to His example.

Therefore, by definition, I believe in a Christian Theistic Worldview, that tells me that knowledge will grow eternally. Some knowledge gain now, some in heaven. Some knowledge shared with other humans today, some very soon with Jesus, angels and other believers who also have faith in in this worldview and who will dwell with me forever.

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