

identified with the original.”¹ This observation to a certain extent helps understand one aspect of the dispute held in *Tygodnik Powszechny*. Some contributors, especially those advocating the “conservative” position, seem to (consciously or not) cherish the diachronic idea of Bible translations superseding rather than complementing one another. However, a glance at the last several decades, especially in the English-speaking world, leads one to believe that the days when a single Bible translation was used by Christian believers regardless of denominational or sociolinguistic differences—as once was the case with the Authorized Version—are probably never to return. On the contrary, there is an increasing tendency to “personalize” and “customize” the Bible, as proven by the commercial success of the multiple editions of the New International Version and especially the New Living Translation targeted at various age, social, and professional groups. (Whether the *Good Reading*, as of today incorporating four chapters of a single gospel, deserves the name of a Bible version—and the excitement worthy of one—is yet another issue.)

The authors of the *Good Reading* assert that their work “is not intended to become an official translation”; rather it is “directed to a clearly defined reader, so it may not be entirely coherent linguistically, methodologically or theologically.”² As we have seen, its coherence and consistency, as well as the accuracy of a number of translational solutions, could certainly be improved (which is *notabene* also true of other versions in varying degrees) and whether it has fulfilled its intended purpose is difficult to assess without conducting focused research. Quite regardless of that, it has certainly succeeded in stimulating animated discussion among Polish linguists, theologians, and preachers, and more importantly, has contributed to raising the popular awareness regarding some of the issues involved in Bible translation, which may be its single most important effect.

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WORLDVIEW ANALYSIS: An Exegetical Tool for Bible Translation (Part 1)³

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Introduction

One of the topics of discussion in current lexicography and semantics is the degree in which so-called encyclopedic knowledge needs to be included in a dictionary or lexicon. Encyclopedic knowledge is usually defined as information that is not describing the linguistic meaning of lexical items, but rather the extralinguistic aspects (Gouws, 1989:186). In order to have a more accurate picture of what

1 Bożena Szczepińska. *Ewangelie tylekroć tłumaczone . . .* (Gdańsk: Wydawnictwo Uniwersytetu Gdańskiego, 2005), 25.

2 From private correspondence with the authors.

3 [For a more thorough discussion of this topic, see the author’s *Semantics, World View and Bible Translation* (Sun Press, 2006). –ed.]

exactly is meant, I suggest defining encyclopedic knowledge as knowledge that enables the reader to understand the cultural and historical background of a lexical item. The need for such information increases when the distance between the source and receptor cultures increases in terms of worldview, time, and social circumstances.

This issue is most relevant for Bible translation, where the historical and cultural distance that has to be bridged is significant. In the field of cross-cultural communication, the amount of “extralinguistic” information that needs to be included in the communication event is always subject to debate. What exactly are the criteria to be used in deciding on the inclusion of encyclopedic knowledge? And what exegetical tool can be used to identify the cultural information that is needed in order to convey the intended meaning to the reader?

In order to answer these questions, particularly from a worldview perspective, there is need for a careful analytical approach. The issue of worldview has been extensively debated in anthropological literature, but very few analytical models have been developed. In this article I will make a proposal for such a model, based on the work of Kearney (1984). I will first provide a general overview of the literature on worldview. This will be followed by a description and evaluation of the model of Kearney, after which I will propose a modified model that can serve as an analytical tool in cross-cultural communication. Finally, the paper will offer some conclusions and recommendations with special relevance to Bible translation.

A second article will provide practical examples of worldview analysis of biblical texts as well as receptor cultures. The implications for Bible translation practice will be demonstrated.

Worldview: a theoretical framework

Introduction

Although the concept of worldview is well known and widely used, a general and comprehensive theoretical treatise on the subject is not easy to come by. Several authors mention the concept without elaborating on it, or even without distinguishing it from other related concepts. The most striking example of this lack of distinction is probably Hammond-Tooke (1981), whose study on the structure of Sotho worldview seems to be in need of a solid theoretical basis. He treats worldview and cosmology as synonymous (xiii), struggles to differentiate it from the broader concept of “culture” to the extent that it is in danger of becoming indistinguishable from the totality of “culture” (xiii) and then concludes: “yet intuitively one feels that the concept *is* useful . . . *All in all it is probably better to keep the term vague* (xiii-xiv, italics mine).” It is obvious that this kind of definition does not sufficiently justify the need for an approach from the perspective of worldview theory; neither does it suggest that a worldview perspective adds anything to an analysis of a culture or a text that is not provided by general cultural anthropology, or more specifically by an ethnographic description.

Overview of existing literature

Not surprisingly, most literature available on the subject is in the area of missiology and cross-cultural communication. Some of the authors take the

concept for granted and build on it, simply assuming that it exists, but without further developing the theory, such as Nida (1990), Shaw (1988), and Smalley (1991:208-13). They mainly use the concept to illustrate the complications of the process of cross-cultural communication. They base it on a worldview concept that, as I already stated, is assumed to be understood by the reader, such as in Nida who says:

In contrasting cultures we must not, however, restrict our point of view to an assortment of isolated traits. We need to see the differences in their broadest possible perspective, in terms of a people's "world view," or system of values (1990:58).

Similarly, Shaw (1988:107) states that "world view provides the basic assumptions upon which the society operates."

Others develop a worldview theory or important aspects of it, such as Hiebert (1983), Luzbetak (1989), Kraft (1988), and Wendland (1987). Basically, these authors describe worldview as an explanatory model that helps people "to find meaning in existence and to impose order on the world (Hiebert, 1983:355)." The concept goes behind the objects and patterns that can be observed in human behavior and tries to analyze basic assumptions that underlie human behavior and that, to a large extent, influence or even determine the values and norms on which such behavior is based. An important aspect of the concept is the fact that many of these basic assumptions "are implicit, because they are taken for granted and never questioned. Together they form a more or less consistent world view that orders people's experiences and gives meaning to their lives (Hiebert, 1983:369)." The implications of this for the practical application of the concept in ethnographic description are still a bit vague, since there are no clear criteria to be used for analytical purposes.

Luzbetak (1989:252-4) provides the concept with more tools for practical application. He bases his description of worldview on theoretical considerations identical to those of Hiebert. In addition he distinguishes three dimensions in worldview:

1. *The cognitive dimension of a world view.* The world view tells the society what to think about life and the world
2. *The emotional dimension of a world view.* A world view also tells the society how it is to feel about, evaluate, and react to the world and all reality
3. *The motivational dimension of world view.* Motivational aspects of a world view are a society's basic priorities, purposes, concerns, ideals, desires, hopes, longings, goals, and drives corresponding to its understanding of the universe.

Another practical application of the worldview concept is developed by Kraft (1988:53-63). He describes the major functions of worldview and distinguishes the following five different functions for a group of people:

1. The first function [of a world view] is the *explanation* of how and why things got to be as they are and how and why they continue to change.
2. [It] serves as an *evaluating*—a judging and validating—function.

3. [It] also provides *psychological reinforcement* for that group.
4. [It] serves as an *integrating* function. It systematizes and orders for them their perceptions of reality into an overall design.
5. [It] does not completely determine the perception of all its members at all times There is change in this as well as in all other areas of culture. That function may be labeled *adaptational*.

Elsewhere Kraft (1987) pictures worldview as the core of a culture influencing the various so-called cultural “subsystems (38-39).” This view is visualized in Figure 1.

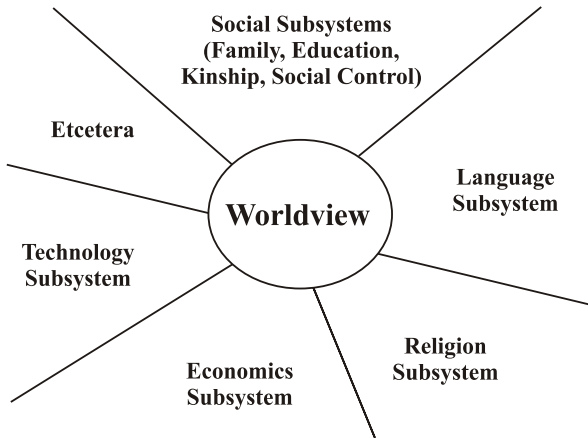


Figure 1 Worldview and cultural subsystems
(Adapted from Kraft, 1987:38)

The idea of worldview as the core of culture is expressed in a different way by Wendland (1987). He makes a distinction between what he calls “two principal components which comprise any of the world’s many cultures: internal and external, or conceptual and behavioral (6).” The second one (external/behavioral) is fairly easy to describe since it is expressed in many explicit and observable ways, but

The *conceptual* component is more basic; it is the core of culture that motivates and organizes all meaningful activity—verbal and nonverbal—and which, in turn, functions as the normative grid to which all socially acceptable behavior must conform. This is the so-called “world (or ‘life’) view” which represents a people’s conception of reality, that is, their understanding of the universe and of man’s place in it. World view, which may or may not have a scientifically “objective” basis, is a cover term that includes a broad assortment of conceptual categories: beliefs, presuppositions, values, norms, ideas, ideals, attitudes, goals, expectations, interests and so forth. The world view, or “mind set,” provides an organizing framework whereby an individual makes sense of the “real world” around him, and it serves as a

guide for interpreting reality, which includes words and actions of those with whom he is living (6).

This lengthy quote serves to illustrate that he and most authors still struggle with the concept of worldview. Different equivalents are mentioned: life view, or mind set. The vagueness of the notion of worldview that was already noted by Hammond-Tooke still has not disappeared. In fact the concept as it has been presented thus far is almost identical to what Barbour calls “critical realism.” He suggests that people construct mental maps of reality which are meant to help one understand the world and to explain phenomena (1974:30). Thus he makes a distinction between an objective and subjective reality. The subjective reality comes to our minds through a mental picture by our observations and experiences of reality. This explains why reality as it is observed by members of one culture differs from the reality observed by members of another culture, or from the reality observed by the ones studying a particular culture. Worldview, as explained thus far, does not leave this notion of “critical realism” at the level of the individual, but it clearly notes that the same dynamics are operational at group level, in this case at the level of various cultures.

Smith (1982:26-28) develops this idea of “group level” from an adapted model of cultural tradition that he bases on ideas posed by the Pan-Babylonian school, an influential school at the beginning of the twentieth century. They introduced the notion of a total system, one they called *Weltanschauung*. Smith’s model recognizes this totality, but he distinguishes three levels:

1. that of “world view,” which is characterized by “imposing uniformity”;
2. that of “culture complex,” the particular *Weltbild* or *Gestalt* of a given people; and
3. the linguistic manifestation of the interaction between these two.

The interesting point of Smith’s model is obviously the link that he brings in with the “linguistic manifestation.” The cohesion between linguistic expression and cultural identity has generally been recognized as a crucial one and can only be separated at the expense of misunderstanding either one of them. As Malina (1986:2) says, “To interpret any piece of language adequately is to interpret the social system it expresses.” If the reader has no access to the social system, s/he will supply his/her own meaning to the text, based on a social reality familiar to him/her.

The crucial role of worldview in the analysis of culture has been amply demonstrated. However, none of the authors has tried to describe and illustrate it, specifically with regard to comparison of different cultures. The more fundamental point, made by Wendland, the argument that worldview “may or may not have a scientifically ‘objective’ basis” has not been discussed. This question will be addressed in the following section when I discuss the contribution to the development of worldview theory by Kearney (1984). His book is an attempt to provide this “scientifically objective basis.” I propose this model, in a modified way and with certain extensions, as the basis for worldview analysis as part of preparatory exegetical work in translation.

A worldview theory

The question of universals

How is a worldview built up? Of what elements is it comprised? Is there an objective way of carrying out the exercise of identifying, describing, and analyzing the worldview of a particular culture? In order to be able to do this and in order to have a measure of objectivity in the analytical and comparative process, Kearney brings in the somewhat controversial notion of worldview universals (65-108). He does not look for universals that can be identified as a universal alphabet of human cultural behavior. Rather he uses a limited number of universals as possible dimensions that can be used to describe the worldview of a culture and not to prove a common conceptual foundation for the structure of all cultures. In fact he says, "the universals . . . were selected more out of a practical necessity to have some usable categories than out of any sense that they are incontrovertibly the only valid ones (208)." If this qualifying statement that indicates the relativity of the universals had been used at the outset of the argument, the theory would certainly have gained in terms of credibility. In his current approach, Kearney still has to grapple with the question whether or not the categories are truly universals (207). Otherwise he could have limited himself to another more relevant question, "whether or not they [i.e., the universals he describes] are the most appropriate categories for describing, analyzing, and comparing world views (207)." This last question indeed should be asked and may receive different answers depending on the type of comparison one wants to make. I would therefore like to suggest avoiding the term "universals" and instead use "variables." These variables can be applied under certain conditions for comparative purposes and they may have to be modified for others. With this adjustment in the terminology, I consider the categories that he is suggesting and that I will describe in the next paragraph as useful analytical tools.

Worldview variables

I largely follow the worldview model that was developed by Kearney (1984:65-121). It is important to consider that "models provide the frame of reference for assessing which data are relevant, the quality of the data, and the relationship between the data (Simkins, 1994:16)." It should also be noted that the theoretical model developed by Kearney is still the most recent one in terms of the development of worldview theory. More recent worldview studies, such as Simkins (1994), Lawrenz and Gray (1995), and George (1999), take Kearney's model without any modification as the basis for their analysis.

Classification

There is a tendency among peoples to classify reality according to specific categories that may or may not be particular to their culture. People usually name objects and even abstract entities and fit them into larger more general categories. The criteria to form these categories may differ from one culture to the other. They provide essential insight into the cognitive organization of a culture.

Self and Other

These two variables provide the members of a culture with an understanding of the nature of the human universe and the way one deals with internal and external relationships. To what extent is the presence of a *Self* discernibly different from its environment which is then categorized as *Other*? This involves two important aspects. The first one considers the awareness of being distinct from the environment. The second, the way in which one relates to it.

Relationship

It follows from the discussion of *Self* and *Other* that *Relationship* is another crucial variable. It is given by the necessary interaction between the two. This interaction exists not only between *Self* and *Other*, but also with the other categories in the model. Relationship and images thereof from the past, also in terms of collective experience, will have influence on behavior and the strategies one applies in interacting with the *Other* and the environment, both physical and spiritual.

Causality

The questions of power or cause need to be addressed. What are the forces at work in the society, at an individual level, in the universe? The existence of ritual in society is a clear indication of the relevance of these questions. Ritual tries to provide the society with an answer to questions such as: How are these forces perceived? Is the perception personal, divine, or both? And how can they be influenced? What is the relationship between causes and effects? *Causality* should provide insight into this aspect of worldview.

Time

Time is most visibly expressed in the way languages mark tense. Issues can be discussed out of time. There may be ways to deal with issues of the past as well as considering the present or anticipating the future. What ways are employed to do this? Is myth an important way to discuss past events, or is it through a linear concept of history?

Space

Does a specific worldview provide the members of a culture with certain assumptions about space or, more precisely, location? How does a culture deal with notions of distance and direction? Is a certain space accessible to all? What are the criteria in deciding the accessibility? This variable provides the guidelines within a worldview as to how one relates to these issues in an acceptable manner.

Integration and adaptation of worldview variables

In order to function as a practical model that by approximation mirrors reality it is crucial to show the inter-relatedness of the different variables. The heavy lines indicate the most direct relationships.

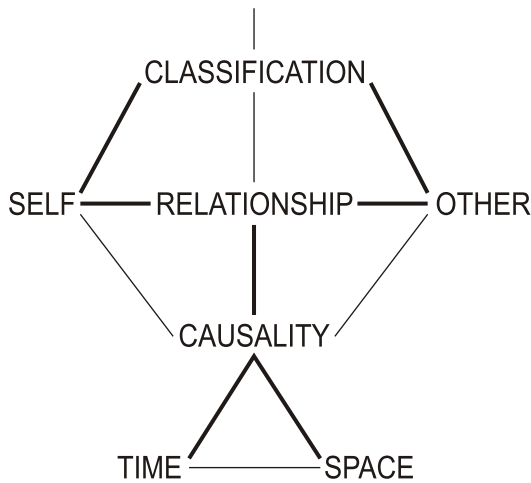


Figure 2 Integration of worldview variables
(Kearney 1984:106)

Although the model indeed clearly shows the fact that there is a high degree of inter-relatedness, the actual situation is much more dynamic than this diagram is able to convey, certainly when a cross-cultural comparison is the subject of investigation. The inter-relatedness varies and is not as static as the diagram of Figure 2 seems to suggest. The diagram suggests that no direct relationship exists between *Time* and *Space* on one side and *Classification* on the other, but *Time* and *Space* are essential elements in *Classification* and, more in general, the organization of a culture. The diagram also fails to point out some of the other relationships clearly. It is not clear why *Time* and *Space* are almost outside the main body of the diagram, while they are crucial variables in the description of the various aspects of any worldview. In addition to this, the use of the so-called “heavy lines” is debatable. The diagram does not say anything about the degree of “directness” between *Causality* and *Classification*, or does a relationship not exist between these two? It is also not clear why certain relationships are supposed to be more direct than others.

Adaptations have to be made. Therefore, I propose some alterations in order to develop a hypothetical and flexible model that can be modified in the context of a specific culture and which is only used for analytical purposes, not as a fixed model that entails all cultural traits and assumptions that can be identified. The modifications of the model required in a given culture are then an indication of the different worldview structures that are operational within a specific culture. In other words, the actual worldview analysis may result in different models with different central variables and varying degrees in intensity of the relationships between the variables. The model then visualizes the different perceptions of “reality” and conceptualizations that exist in different cultures.

I therefore propose some modifications. In the original model, *Time* and *Space* are only directly related to *Causality*, while in fact these variables are encompassing in a sense that all others are somehow imbedded in them. The *Time* and *Space* variables, as well as all the other variables, should therefore take a more fluent position in the diagram. This has been pictured in Figure 3, where *Time* and *Space* are not specifically linked to any of the other variables, but have been integrated among the other worldview variables. Another modification is the use of lines of equal thickness to indicate the dynamic nature of the model. At the same time, the lines indicate the mutual influences that the variables may exert on each other. The exact position and the degree of intensity of the relationships between the variables may differ according to the specific culture it represents.

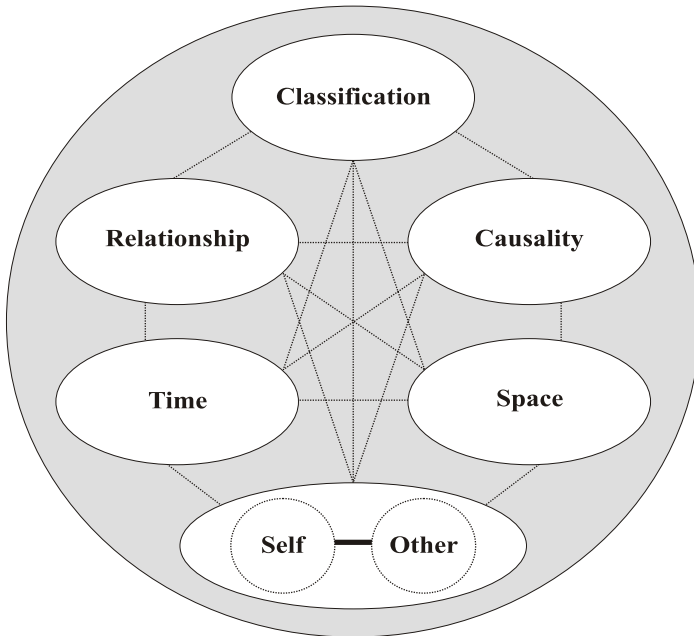


Figure 3 Adjusted model of worldview variables

The variables *Self* and *Other* have been grouped together within one circle to indicate its close mutual relationship. The definition of *Self* influences the definition of *Other* directly and they cannot be analyzed independently.

Each variable is randomly positioned within the circle. On the basis of the analysis of a particular culture, one variable may appear to be more prominent or central than others. It is therefore necessary to draw a diagram for each analyzed culture, representing the peculiarities of that culture. The worldview analysis will have to be carried out using these variables as categories of analysis and

description, after which a model for each of the analyzed cultures will have to be built.

Conclusions and recommendations

I end this paper with the formulation of some conclusions and recommendations which are actually intended as points of departure for research in the area of worldview and Bible translation. These practical points also address some of the issues that are pertinent to this kind of analysis:

- If the proposed worldview analysis is carried out for both the source and the receptor cultures, it will bring out clearly where the differences between the cultures are at a conceptual level. The analysis will then show which encyclopedic information is relevant for the reader in order to have access to the full semantic contents of the text.
- The analysis of the worldview variables should take the text as point of departure and not the model of worldview variables on which the analysis is based. The model is an analytical tool meant to describe and interpret reality and to make it more accessible. It is not reality itself. For Bible translators, reality (or, rather, a particular perception of it) is found in the biblical text, even though this perception may have been idealized or modified for the specific purpose of the author and redactor(s). The Bible provides the texts to be translated with all their specific elements and complicated histories of composition and redaction included. One of the goals is to construct a worldview model that reflects the variables in a relevant way, clearly showing their coherence within each book. The contents of the books should therefore not be forced into the framework of the model, but its application should flow naturally from the text.
- It is impossible to construct an entire worldview system on the basis of a corpus of data that was produced with a specific purpose, such as the corpus we have available for Bible translation. In addition to that, there is no possibility of obtaining additional information from representatives of this worldview. The analysis should therefore almost exclusively touch on issues that are apparent from the text. Other sources of information could possibly be found in non-canonical texts and archeology. This situation differs significantly from that of the receptor cultures.
- Accepting the complex nature of reality, our perception thereof, and the fact that borders of time, culture, and language will have to be crossed in this kind of analysis, it will not always be possible to isolate or separate all variables strictly from each other. In other words, the system should be seen as a complex whole with many cross-border connections.
- There is often a discrepancy between the official perspective represented by the biblical authors and the actual practice of the people who are being addressed. This could be termed a tension between the ideal and the real. This tension is notably an intrinsic part of many occurrences of OT prophecy. The prophets often act as men sent from God to correct a certain situation or to pronounce judgement on it. In other words, there must be contrasts in the situation described, otherwise the corrective words of the prophet would be irrelevant. These contrasting perspectives will need to be accommodated in an analysis.

- A worldview analysis is distinctly different from a purely exegetical exercise. It looks for possible assumptions underlying actual or desired behavior, while it also looks for certain conceptual structures (which may or may not be consciously present) that explain people's perception of reality.

Ideally, the effort can best be summarized in the words of Simkins (1994:13), "... it is necessary to construct a worldview that can account for the biblical texts as if they were predicated on this worldview."

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