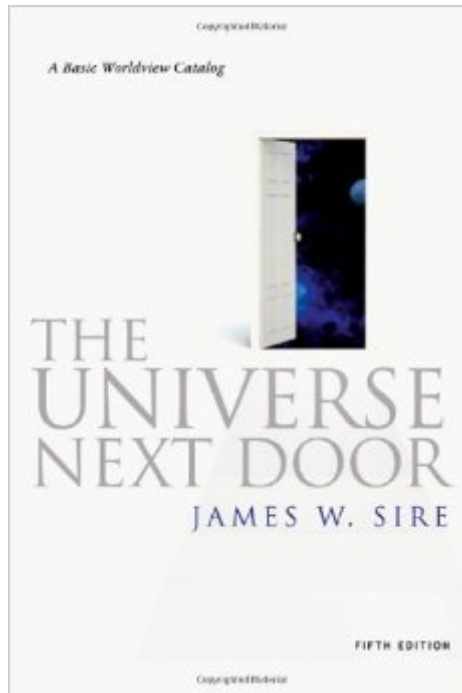


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The Universe Next Door: A Basic Worldview Catalog, 5th Edition



Synopsis

Voted one of Christianity Today's 1998 Books of the Year! For more than thirty years, *The Universe Next Door* has set the standard for a clear, readable introduction to worldviews. In this new fifth edition James Sire offers additional student-friendly features to his concise, easily understood introductions to theism, deism, naturalism, Marxism, nihilism, existentialism, Eastern monism, New Age philosophy and postmodernism. Included in this expanded format are a new chapter on Islam and informative sidebars throughout. The book continues to build on Sire's refined definition of worldviews from the fourth edition and includes other updates as well, keeping this standard text fresh and useful. In a world of ever-increasing diversity, *The Universe Next Door* offers a unique resource for understanding the variety of worldviews that compete with Christianity for the allegiance of minds and hearts. *The Universe Next Door* has been translated into over a dozen languages and has been used as a text at over one hundred colleges and universities in courses ranging from apologetics and world religions to history and English literature. Sire's *Naming the Elephant: Worldview as a Concept* provides a useful companion volume for those desiring a more in-depth discussion of the nature of a worldview.

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Customer Reviews

In *The Universe Next Door*, author James Sire discusses the eight main worldviews that are held by different individuals in the twentieth century and then provides seven basic yet probative questions to help the reader recognize the primary presuppositions that underlie each main belief system.

Further discussion is provided to help the reader analyze the cohesiveness and validity of each worldview presented. The history of each worldview is discussed in great detail so that the reader can see the progression of each view, why it arose and what events led to its overall acceptance or denial among the masses. Mr. Sire then compares and contrasts each worldview with others mentioned in the book, evaluating each worldview in turn. The emphasis is on awareness and understanding, encouraging the reader to become more consciously aware of what they believe, why they believe what they do, and how this belief colors the way they view life. The book concludes with a detailed chapter, entitled, "The Examined Life" that summarizes the basic points made throughout the book and then provides tools intended to help the reader choose the most logical, cohesive and consistent worldview. Overall, the Universe Next Door is a very thorough, and yet manageable, discussion of the eight (or six, depending on how one classifies the material) main belief systems that exist in today's culture. Presented in a somewhat relaxed manner, the language used by Mr. Sire ensures understandability and readability, successfully moving difficult philosophical topics out of the university classroom and placing them in the hands of the layman. Because each worldview is discussed in relation to the six main questions presented at the beginning of the book, analysis of all views is both easy and consistent.

Now in its fifth edition, James W. Sire has written the go-to introduction to nine major worldviews. Sire has written this book with the desire for people (especially Christians) to grasp the importance of understanding what a worldview is, what are the other worldviews other than their own and what their own worldview is. Sire defines a worldview as a "Commitment, a fundamental orientation of the heart, that can be expressed as a story or in a set of presuppositions (assumptions which may be true, partially true or entirely false) that we hold (consciously or unconsciously, consistently or inconsistently) about the basic constitution of reality, and that provides the foundation on which we live and move and have our being." (p. 20) The book takes a very informal approach to presenting and evaluating the nine worldviews. Sire examines the worldviews by asking eight basic questions that all worldviews must answer:

1. What is prime reality? - This question gets to the foundation of what a worldview understands to be the foundation of reality. For Sire this is the first and foundational question that must be answered before the other seven.
2. What is the nature of external reality, that is, the world around us? - This looks at whether we see the world around us as created or autonomous, material or immaterial, etc.
3. What is a human being? - For instance, are people made in the image of God or just a machine?
4. What happens to a person at death? - This looks at options like extinction, reincarnation or transfer to a higher state of existence.
5. Why is it possible to know

anything at all? - Answers include being created in the image of God or just the result of an evolutionary process.⁶ How do we know what is right and wrong?

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