

A CHRISTIAN APPROACH TO PHILOSOPHY

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A philosophy of life guides our actions and behavior as we go through life. Our belief about truth, reality, and value determines our perceptions of the world and the universe. Our response to questions about anthropology determines our relationship with students and people in general. The way we treat students and our beliefs about theological issues also determines our perception of what knowledge is of most worth to be included in the curriculum.

Knight [2] suggests that even a cursory glance at basic metaphysical issues reveals their importance for every educational practice. He further opined that it is crucial that every educational program be based upon fact and reality rather than fancy, illusion, or imagination. Schools programs, treatment of disciplinary matters and teachers' instructional methods will differ dramatically, depending on how they view each student.

Metaphysics deals with the nature of reality. Thus, many churches spend millions of dollars each year transferring certain values to students because of their metaphysical beliefs regarding the nature of ultimate reality, the existence of God, and the role of God in human beings as God's children. Metaphysics is a major determinant of everything we as teachers do in the classroom.

Another branch of philosophy that is closely related to metaphysics that stands at the center of the education process is the issue of

epistemology. Epistemology seeks to shine the spotlight on the nature, sources and validity of knowledge through which we gain information. Since both educational systems and teachers in every education system deal in knowledge; they are engaged in an epistemological undertaking.

Knight [2] claims that "epistemology has a direct impact upon education on a moment-by-moment basis". This impact, he further suggests, will give rise to assumptions about the importance of the various sources of knowledge which will certainly be reflected in curricular emphases and teaching methodologies.

Due to the fact that Christian teachers believe in revelation as a source of certain knowledge, they will undoubtedly choose a curriculum and a central biblical role in that curriculum that differ substantially from curricular choices of secular school teachers. It is true for educators of all philosophic persuasions, that their entire philosophic worldview will color the presentation of every topic they teach.

Our belief about reality and truth as educators will lead us to assumptions found in the third great philosophic realm of axiology. Axiology is the branch of philosophy that deals with the questions of "What is of value?" which is stemmed from the fact that people are valuing beings who prefer some things over others. Therefore, rational individual and social life is based upon a system of values.

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Values define what a person or a society views as good or preferable in terms of behavior (ethics) and beauty (aesthetics). This also speaks to the great efforts and expenses alluded to earlier that churches have invested in to pass on their beliefs about good behavior and beauty to the younger generation. Though it is controversial both in daily life and in the classroom when parents, teachers, and students disagree about various issues, such as television, music, or sexual behavior, these issues must be elucidated in society to ensure acceptable values are practiced and transmitted. The problem we face makes sense in the complex world in which we live. The almost universal longing of human beings to make sense of their world has led them to ask those questions that form the heart of philosophy. A Christian view of metaphysics provides the foundation for Christian education.

Metaphysics, epistemology and axiology have imposing implications for the operation of a Christian school. As a consequence, the goals teachers choose suggest appropriate decisions about a variety of areas: students' needs, teacher's role in the classroom, the most important things to emphasize in the curriculum, the best teaching methodologies to communicate the curriculum, and the societal function of the school.

Only when one has taken a position on such matters can appropriate policies be implemented. According to Palmer (1998), to educate is to guide students on an inner journey toward more truthful ways of seeing and being in the world.

In a Christian epistemology, the findings of reason must always be checked against the truth of scripture. Epistemology has direct impact upon education on a moment-by-moment basis [2]. For example, assumptions about the importance of various sources of

knowledge will certainly be reflected in the curriculum emphases and teaching methodologies. Christian teachers believe in revelation as a source of valid knowledge. As a result, these teachers will undoubtedly choose a curriculum and a role for the bible in the curriculum choices even of non-believers. In fact, the philosophic worldview of teachers' faith will shape the presentation of every topic taught. A distinct metaphysical and epistemological viewpoint will lead the educator to a value orientation. However, one must agree with Knight (1998) that the most fundamental and inescapable observation facing human being is the reality and mystery of personal existence in a complex environment. A Christian view of metaphysics provides the foundation for Christian education. Christian education systems have been established because God exists and it is believed that His existence sheds light on the meaning of every aspect.

Our Christian values should impact our daily activities as educators at all levels. Thus, every aspect of our education should be determined by the biblical worldview of reality. Biblical metaphysics should determine what we study in schools, and the contextual framework of how every subject is presented. As such, the biblical view of reality supplies the criteria for curriculum selection and emphasis.

This is because the biblical based curriculum has a unique metaphysical viewpoint. Biblical metaphysical presuppositions not only justify and determine the existence of curriculum and social role of Christian education, but they also explicate the nature, needs and potential of learners. Also, it suggests the most beneficial types of relationships between teachers and their students, and provides the criteria for the selection of teaching methodologies. According to Arthur [1], education has is directly related with the transmission of values. Based on this truism, axiology is placed alongside

metaphysics and epistemology as foundational aspects of Christian education.

REFERENCES

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