Redemptive Education Part I

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This article is the first of three on the philosophy of Seventh-day Adventist education. Part I examines the importance of the topic, describes the basic shape of philosophy, examines the foundational philosophic categories from a biblical perspective, and indicates the importance of the biblical worldview in shaping an Adventist approach to education. Parts II and III will develop the implications of a biblical philosophic perspective for educational practice. Many of the topics covered in the first article are treated in greater depth in the author's Philosophy and Education: An Introduction in Christian Perspective*, 4th ed. (Berrien Springs, Mich.: Andrews University Press, 2006).*

Why study philosophy of education? After all, time is short, and there are so many practical things to learn. Why waste precious hours on something so esoteric and useless?

Those are good questions that remind me of the multitude of laws that populate our world. The world, as we all know, is full of laws; not only in the physical realm, but also in the social. I have been collecting these enlightening laws for some years.

Take SCHMIDT'S LAW, for example: "If you mess with a thing long enough, it will break."

Or WEILER'S LAW: "Nothing is impossible for the man who doesn't have to do it himself."

And then there is JONES'S LAW: "The person who can smile when things go wrong has thought of someone to blame it on."

Of course, we wouldn't want to overlook BOOB'S LAW: "You always find something in the last place you look for it."

Having been enlightened by such wisdom, I eventually decided to try my hand at developing some cryptic and esoteric sagacity of my own.

The result: KNIGHT'S LAW, with two corollaries. Put simply, KNIGHT'S LAW reads that "It is impossible to arrive at your destination unless you know where you are going." Corollary Number 1: "A school that does not come close to attaining its goals will eventually lose its support." Corollary Number 2: "We think only when it hurts."

Those bits of "wisdom" were created in my days as a young professor of educational philosophy, when I concluded, as I still believe, that a sound philosophy of education is the most useful and practical item in a teacher's repertoire. That is true in part because philosophy at its best deals with the most basic issues of life—such as the nature of reality, truth, and value. Closely related to philosophy is the concept of worldview, which "roughly speaking, . . . refers to a person's interpretation of reality and a basic view of life."[1]

People's beliefs about the philosophic issues of reality, truth, and value will determine everything they do in both their personal and professional lives. Without a distinctive philosophic position on those three categories, a person or group cannot make decisions, form a curriculum, or evaluate institutional or individual progress. With a consciously chosen philosophy, however, a person or group can set goals to be achieved and select courses of action to reach those goals.

Of course, a human being can choose to merely wander aimlessly through life and a professional teaching career. Or he or she can operate on the basis of someone else's decision making. The first of those options, if taken seriously, suggests a philosophic belief that life itself is aimless and without clearly defined purposes, while the second may cause a person to act on a well-thought-out philosophy of education but one that has the disconcerting result of leading in the wrong direction.

I would like to suggest that a consciously thought-out philosophy of education is not only

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educator's most practical acquisition, but also or her most important one. Ellen White 27-1915), Seventh-day Adventism's prophetic ught leader, held the same viewpoint. "By a conception of the true nature and object of ıcation," she wrote, "many have been led into ious and even fatal errors [*eternally* fatal in overall context of her writings]. Such a mis- e is made when the regulation of the heart or establishment of principles is neglected in effort to secure intellectual culture, or when rnal interests are overlooked in the eager de- for temporal advantage."[2]

Again, she wrote, "the necessity of establish- Christian schools is urged upon me very ngly. In the schools of today many things are ght that are a hindrance rather than a bless- . Schools are needed where the word of God ıade the basis of education. Satan is the great my of God, and it is his constant aim to lead ls away from their allegiance to the King of ıven. He would have minds so trained that n and women will exert their influence on the e of error and moral corruption, instead of ng their talents in the service of God. His ob- is effectually gained, when by perverting ir ideas of education, he succeeds in enlisting ents and teachers on his side; for a wrong ed- tion often starts the mind on the road to infi- ity."[3]

It is such thoughts that have led various ristian denominations, including Seventh-day ventists, down through history to go to great ense and effort to establish their own ools. Providing greater urgency has been Ad- ıtists' conviction that each of the church's ldren (as well as the church itself) is caught he midst of a great struggle between good and l. Therefore, the church moved proactively to ablish an educational system based on not y a general Christian understanding of reality, h, and value, but one that also reflects dis- ctively Adventist understandings.

Coming to grips with the undergirding ideas t have led to the establishment and operation Seventh-day Adventist schools is the realm of Adventist philosophy of education. Of course, ppling with basic ideas is only part of the task. er aspects include developing practices in har- ny with those foundational understandings l implementing them in the life of the school. e first two of those goals fit under the rubric educational philosophy. The practical aspect is educator's responsibility to implement after sciously thinking through not only his or her ic beliefs, but also how those beliefs can and uld impact daily life and professional practice. Before moving to a discussion of the basic issues of philosophy, it is important to point out that a philosophy of education is much broader than a philosophy of schooling. Schools are only one aspect of any social group's educational system. The family, media, peer group, and church also share the responsibility for educating the next generation, with the family holding the dominant role. That fact must be recognized even though these study materials will use categories that are most often linked with schooling. But the insights being shared are just as important to educators in the church and family as they are to teachers in the school. The best overall educational experience, of course, takes place when parents, teachers, and church leaders all share the same concerns and provide a learning environment in which each student experiences a unified education rather than a schizophrenic one in which the significant educators all espouse different views. With that in mind, it is no accident that Seventh-day Adventists have gone to the effort and expense of establishing a system that currently has almost 8,000 schools.

Different systems of education have varying goals, and those goals are based on differing philosophies of education. With that thought in mind, we now turn to an examination of the issues basic to philosophy, followed by a look at the Christian/Adventist understanding of those issues. Lastly, we will examine the educational practices that flow out of those understandings.

Philosophic Issues and Their Relevance for Education

Philosophy deals with the most basic issues faced by human beings. The content of philosophy is better seen as asking questions rather than providing answers. It can even be said that philosophy is the *study of questions*. Van Cleve Morris has noted that the crux of the matter is asking the "*right*" questions. By "*right*" he meant questions that are meaningful and relevant—the kind of questions people really want answered and that will make a difference in how they live and work.[4]

Philosophical content has been organized around three fundamental categories:

1. *Metaphysics*—the study of questions concerning the nature of reality;

2. *Epistemology*—the study of the nature of truth and knowledge and how these are attained and evaluated; and

3. *Axiology*—the study of the question of value.

Without a distinctive philosophy of reality, truth, and value, a person or group cannot make intelligent decisions either for their individual lives or for developing an educational system.

The questions addressed by philosophy are so basic that there is no escaping them. As a result, all of us, whether we consciously understand our philosophic positions or not, conduct our personal lives and our corporate existence on the basis of "answers" to the basic questions of life. There is no decision making that is unrelated to the issues of reality, truth, and value. To put it succinctly: *Philosophy drives decision making.* For that reason alone, the study of the foundational questions of philosophy is important. After all, it is better to function with understanding than to wander through life in ignorance of the factors that shape our choices.

With the importance of understanding the basic issues in mind, in the next few pages we will briefly describe the three main philosophic categories and then move on to an Adventist perspective on each of them.

METAPHYSICS

One of the two most basic philosophic categories is metaphysics. That rather threatening-sounding word actually comes from two Greek words meaning "beyond physics." As such, metaphysics is the branch of philosophy that deals with the nature of reality. "What is ultimately real?" is the basic question asked in the study of metaphysics.

At first glance, the answer to that query seems rather obvious. After all, most people seem to be quite certain about the "reality" of their world. If you ask them, they will probably tell you to open your eyes and look at the clock on the wall, to listen to the sound of a passing train, or to bend down to touch the floor beneath your feet. These things are, they claim, what is ultimately real.

But are they? Their answers are located on the plane of physics rather than metaphysics. There are surely more foundational questions. For example, where did the material for floors, the power that runs trains, and the regularity of time ultimately originate? It makes no difference if your answer is related to design, accident, or mystery, because once you have begun to deal with the deeper questions, you have moved beyond physics to the realm of metaphysics.

We can gain a glimpse into the realm of metaphysics by examining a list of major questions concerning the nature of reality. The queries of the metaphysician are amongst the most general questions that can be asked. It is important to realize, however, that people need the answers to these questions before they can find satisfactory answers to their more specific questions. Yet complete verification of any particular answer to these questions is beyond the realm of human demonstration or proof. But that does not make the discussion of these issues irrelevant or a mere exercise in mental gymnastics since people, whether they consciously understand it or not, base their daily activities and long-range goals upon a set of metaphysical beliefs. Even people seeking answers to more specific questions—physicists or biologists or historians, for example—cannot ignore metaphysical questions. Thus, undergirding science is the philosophy of science, and foundational to historical understanding is the philosophy of history. It is the philosophy of science and history that provides the theoretical framework for understanding and interpreting the meaning of the facts in each field.

Metaphysical questions may be divided into four subsets. First, the *cosmological aspect*. Cosmology consists in the study of theories about the origin, nature, and development of the universe as an orderly system. Questions such as these populate the realm of cosmology: "How did the universe originate and develop? Did it come about by accident or design? Does its existence have any purpose?"

A second metaphysical aspect is the *theological*. Theology is that part of religious theory that deals with conceptions of and about God. "Is there a God? If so, is there one or more than one? What are the attributes of God? If God is both all good and all powerful, why does evil exist? If God exists, what is His relationship to human beings and the 'real' world of everyday life?"

People answer such questions in a variety of ways. *Atheists* claim that there is no God, while *pantheists* posit that God and the universe are identical—all is God and God is all. *Deists* view God as the maker of nature and moral laws, but assert that He exists apart from, and is not particularly interested in, the daily events of human lives or the physical universe. On the other hand, *theists* believe in a personal Creator God who has a deep and ongoing interest in His creation. *Polytheism* disagrees with *monotheism* in regard to the number of gods, with polytheists holding that deity should be thought of as plural and monotheists insisting that there is one God.[5]

A third subset of metaphysics is the *anthropological*. Anthropology deals with the study of human beings and asks questions like the following: "What is the relation between mind and body? Is mind more fundamental than body, with body depending on mind, or vice versa?" "What is humanity's moral status? Are people born good, evil, or morally neutral?" "To what extent are individuals free? Do they have free will, or are their thoughts and actions determined by their environment, inheritance, or a di-

vine Being?" "Does each person have a soul? If so, what is it?" People have obviously adopted different positions on these questions, and those positions influence their political, social, religious, and educational ideals and practices.

The fourth aspect of metaphysics is the *ontological*. Ontology is the study of the nature of existence, or what it means for anything to exist. Several questions are central to ontology: "Is basic reality found in matter or physical energy (the world we can sense), or is it found in spirit or spiritual energy? Is it composed of one element (e.g., matter or spirit), or two (e.g., matter and spirit), or many?" "Is reality orderly and lawful in itself, or is it merely orderable by the human mind? Is it fixed and stable, or is change its central feature? Is this reality friendly, unfriendly, or neutral toward humanity?"

Metaphysics and Education

Even a cursory study of either historical or contemporary societies will reveal the impact of the cosmological, theological, anthropological, and ontological aspects of metaphysics upon their social, political, economic, and scientific beliefs and practices. People everywhere embrace answers to these questions and then live their daily lives in keeping with those assumptions. There is no escape from metaphysical decisions—unless one chooses to vegetate—and even that choice would be a metaphysical decision about the nature and function of humanity.

Education, like other human activities, cannot operate outside the realm of metaphysics. Metaphysics, or the issue of ultimate reality, is central to any concept of education, because it is important for the educational program of the school (or family or church) to be based upon fact and reality rather than fancy, illusion, error, or imagination. Varying metaphysical beliefs lead to differing educational approaches and even separate systems of education.

Why do Adventists and other Christians spend millions of dollars each year on private systems of education when free public systems are widely available? Because of their metaphysical beliefs regarding the nature of ultimate reality, the existence of God, the role of God in human affairs, and the nature and role of human beings as God's children. At their deepest levels, men and women are motivated by metaphysical beliefs. History demonstrates that people are willing to die for those convictions, and that they desire to create educational environments in which their most basic beliefs will be taught to their children.

The anthropological aspect of metaphysics is especially important for educators of all persuasions. After all, they are dealing with malleable human beings at one of the most impressionable stages of their lives. Views about the nature and potential of students form the foundation of every educational process. The very purpose of education in all philosophies is closely tied to these views. Thus, anthropological considerations lie extremely close to the aims of education. Philosopher D. Elton Trueblood put it nicely when he asserted that "until we are clear on what man is, we shall not be clear about much else."[6]

It makes a great deal of difference whether a student is viewed as Desmond Morris's "naked ape"[7] or as a child of God. Likewise, it is important to know whether children are innately evil or essentially good, or good but radically twisted by the effects of sin. Variations in anthropological positions will produce significantly different approaches to the educational process. Other examples of the impact of metaphysics upon education will become evident further on in our study.

EPISTEMOLOGY

Closely related to metaphysics is the issue of epistemology. Epistemology seeks to answer such basic questions as "What is true?" and "How do we know?" The study of epistemology deals with issues related to the dependability of knowledge and the validity of the sources through which we gain information. Accordingly, epistemology stands—with metaphysics—at the very center of the educative process. Because both educational systems as a whole and teachers in those systems deal in knowledge, they are engaged in an epistemological undertaking.

Epistemology seeks answers to a number of fundamental issues. One is whether reality can even be known. *Skepticism* in its narrow sense is the position claiming that people cannot acquire reliable knowledge and that any search for truth is in vain. That thought was well expressed by Gorgias (c. 483-376 B.C.), the Greek Sophist who asserted that nothing exists, and that if it did, we could not know it. A full-blown skepticism would make intelligent action impossible. A term closely related to skepticism is *agnosticism*. Agnosticism is a profession of ignorance in reference to the existence or nonexistence of God.

Most people claim that reality can be known. However, once they have taken that position, they must decide through what sources reality may be known, and must have some concept of how to judge the validity of their knowledge.

A second issue foundational to epistemology is whether all truth is relative, or whether some

truths are absolute. Is all truth subject to change? Is it possible that what is true today may be false tomorrow? If the answer is "Yes" to the previous questions, such truths are relative. If, however, there is Absolute Truth, such Truth is eternally and universally true irrespective of time or place. If Absolute Truth exists in the universe, then educators would certainly want to discover it and make it the core of the school curriculum. Closely related to the issue of the relativity and absoluteness of truth are the questions of whether knowledge is subjective or objective, and whether there is truth that is independent of human experience.

A major aspect of epistemology relates to the sources of human knowledge. If one accepts the fact that there is truth and even Truth in the universe, how can human beings comprehend such truths? How do they become human knowledge?

Central to most people's answer to that question is *empiricism* (knowledge obtained through the senses). Empirical knowledge appears to be built into the very nature of human experience. Thus, when individuals walk out of doors on a spring day and see the beauty of the landscape, hear the song of a bird, feel the warm rays of the sun, and smell the fragrance of the blossoms, they "know" that it is spring. Sensory knowing for humans is immediate and universal, and in many ways forms the basis of much of human knowledge.

The existence of sensory data cannot be denied. Most people accept it uncritically as representing "reality." The danger of naively embracing this approach is that data obtained from the human senses have been demonstrated to be both incomplete and undependable. (For example, most people have been confronted with the contradiction of seeing a stick that looks bent when partially submerged in water but appears to be straight when examined in the air.) Fatigue, frustration, and illness also distort and limit sensory perception. In addition, there are sound and light waves that are inaudible and invisible to unaided human perception.

Humans have invented scientific instruments to extend the range of their senses, but it is impossible to ascertain the exact dependability of these instruments since no one knows the total effect of the human mind in recording, interpreting, and distorting sensual perception. Confidence in these instruments is built upon speculative metaphysical theories whose validity has been reinforced by experimentation in which predictions have been verified through the use of a theoretical construct or hypothesis.

In summary, sensory knowledge is built upon assumptions that must be accepted by faith in the dependability of human sensory mechanisms. The advantage of empirical knowledge is that many sensory experiences and experiments are open to both replication and public examination.

A second influential source of knowledge throughout the span of human history has been *revelation*. Revealed knowledge has been of prime importance in the field of religion. It differs from all other sources of knowledge because it presupposes a transcendent supernatural reality that breaks into the natural order. Christians believe that such revelation is God's communication concerning the divine will.

Believers in supernatural revelation hold that this form of knowledge has the distinct advantage of being an omniscient source of information that is not available through other epistemological methods. The truth revealed through this source is believed by Christians to be absolute and uncontaminated. On the other hand, it is generally realized that distortion of revealed truth can occur in the process of human interpretation. Some people assert that a major disadvantage of revealed knowledge is that it must be accepted by faith and cannot be proved or disproved empirically.

A third source of human knowledge is *authority*. Authoritative knowledge is accepted as true because it comes from experts or has been sanctified over time as tradition. In the classroom, the most common source of information is some authority, such as a textbook, teacher, or reference work.

Accepting authority as a source of knowledge has its advantages as well as its dangers. Civilization would certainly stagnate if people refused to accept any statement unless they personally verified it through direct, firsthand experience. On the other hand, if authoritative knowledge is built upon a foundation of incorrect assumptions, then such knowledge will surely be distorted.

A fourth source of human knowledge is *reason*. The view that reasoning, thought, or logic is the central factor in knowledge is known as *rationalism*. The rationalist, in emphasizing humanity's power of thought and the mind's contributions to knowledge, is likely to claim that the senses alone cannot provide universal, valid judgments that are consistent with one another. From this perspective, the sensations and experiences humans obtain through their senses are the raw material of knowledge. These sensations must be organized by the mind into a meaningful system before they become knowledge.

Rationalism in a less extreme form claims that people have the power to know with cer-

tainty various truths about the universe that the senses alone cannot give. In its more extreme form, rationalism claims that humans are capable of arriving at irrefutable knowledge independently of sensory experience.

Formal logic is a tool used by rationalists. Systems of logic have the advantage of possessing internal consistency, but they risk being disconnected from the external world. Systems of thought based upon logic are only as valid as the premises upon which they are built.

A fifth source of knowledge is *intuition*—the direct apprehension of knowledge that is not derived from conscious reasoning or immediate sense perception. In the literature dealing with intuition, one often finds such expressions as "immediate feeling of certainty." Intuition occurs beneath the threshold of consciousness and is often experienced as a sudden flash of insight. Intuition has been claimed under varying circumstances as a source of both religious and secular knowledge. Certainly many scientific breakthroughs have been initiated by intuitive hunches that were confirmed by experimentation.

The weakness or danger of intuition is that it does not appear to be a safe method of obtaining knowledge when used alone. It goes astray very easily and may lead to absurd claims unless it is controlled by or checked against other methods of knowing. Intuitive knowledge, however, has the distinct advantage of being able to bypass the limitations of human experience.

At this juncture, it should be noted that no one source of information is capable of supplying people with all knowledge. The various sources should be seen as complementary rather than antagonistic. It is true, however, that most people choose one source as being more basic than, or preferable to, the others. That most basic source is then used as a benchmark for testing other sources of knowledge. For example, in the contemporary world, knowledge obtained empirically is generally seen as the most basic and reliable type. Most people denigrate any purported knowledge that does not agree with scientific theory. By way of contrast, biblical Christianity sees revelation as providing the basic framework against which other sources of knowledge must be tested.

Epistemology and Education

Epistemology has a direct impact upon education on a moment-by-moment basis. For example, assumptions about the importance of various sources of knowledge will certainly be reflected in curricular emphases and teaching methodologies. Because Christian teachers believe in revelation as a source of valid knowledge, they will undoubtedly choose a curriculum and a role for the Bible in that curriculum that differs substantially from the curricular choices of nonbelievers. In fact, the philosophic worldview of their faith will shape the presentation of every topic they teach. That, of course, is true for teachers from every philosophic persuasion and thus constitutes an important argument for educating Adventist youth in Adventist schools.

The Metaphysical-Epistemological Dilemma

The careful reader has probably realized by now that humanity, so to speak, is suspended in midair both metaphysically and epistemologically. Our problem: It is impossible to make statements about reality without first adopting a theory for arriving at truth. On the other hand, a theory of truth cannot be developed without first having a concept of reality. We are caught in a web of circularity.

Through the study of basic questions people are forced to recognize their smallness and helplessness in the universe. They realize that nothing can be known for certain in the sense of final and ultimate proof that is open and acceptable to all people, not even in the natural sciences. Trueblood affirmed that point when he wrote that "it is now widely recognized that absolute proof is something which the human being does not and cannot have. This follows necessarily from the twin fact that deductive reasoning cannot have certainty about its premises and that inductive reasoning cannot have certainty about its conclusions. The notion that, in natural science, we have both certainty and absolute proof is simply one of the superstitions of our age."[8] Every person—the skeptic and the agnostic, the scientist and the businessperson, the Hindu and the Christian—lives by a faith. The acceptance of a particular metaphysical and epistemological position is a "faith-choice" made by each person, and entails a commitment to a way of life.

The circular nature of the reality-truth dilemma is certainly a distressing aspect of philosophical thought; but since it exists, human beings are obligated to make themselves aware of its implications. Of course, this dilemma comes as no surprise to mature scientists who have come to grips with the limitations of their discipline and the philosophy upon which it is built. Neither does it pose a threat to believers in certain religious persuasions who have traditionally viewed their basic beliefs in terms of personal choice, faith, and commitment. The whole problem, however, does come as a source of shock and distress to the average secular individual.

The result of the metaphysical-epistemological dilemma is that all persons live by faith in the basic beliefs they have chosen. The challenge is not having to make a choice, but making the most adequate choice that takes into consideration the full range of realities and knowledges human beings possess. Later in this article, we will begin to explore a Christian/Adventist approach to the major philosophic issues. But we first need to explore the third great philosophic issue—*axiology* or the question of values.

AXIOLOGY

Axiology is the branch of philosophy that seeks to answer the question, "What is of value?" All rational individual and social life is based upon a system of values. Value systems are not universally agreed upon, and different positions on the questions of metaphysics and epistemology produce different value systems because axiological systems are built upon conceptions of reality and truth.

The question of values deals with notions of what a person or a society regards as good or preferable. Axiology, like metaphysics and epistemology, stands at the very foundation of the educational process. A major aspect of education is the development of values. And in that context, the classroom is an axiological theater in which teachers cannot hide their moral selves. By their actions, teachers constantly instruct groups of highly impressionable young people who assimilate and imitate their teachers' value structures to a significant extent.

Axiology has two main branches—*ethics* and *aesthetics*. *Ethics* is the study of moral values and conduct. "How should I behave?" is an ethical question. Ethical theory seeks to provide right values as the foundation for right actions. In many ways, ethics is the crucial issue of our times. World societies have made unprecedented technological advances, but have not advanced significantly, if at all, in their ethical and moral conceptions.

Both as individuals and within societies, human beings exist in a world in which they cannot avoid meaningful ethical decisions. Thus, schools must teach ethical concepts to their students. The problem is that people embrace different ethical bases and feel quite negatively about having their children "indoctrinated" in a moral view that is alien to their fundamental beliefs. That fact has put schools at the center of the various "culture wars" that have rocked society at large.[9] It has also led Adventists and other Christians to establish their own schools. The desire to pass on to their children a specific system of moral values is a powerful motivator for most parents.

At the heart of ethical discussions are such questions as, "Are ethical standards and moral values absolute or relative?" "Do universal moral values exist?" "Can morality be separated from religion?" and "Who or what forms the basis of ethical authority?"

The second major branch of axiology is *aesthetics*. Aesthetics asks such questions as "What is beautiful?" and "What should I like?" Aesthetics is the realm of value that searches for the principles governing the creation and appreciation of beauty and art in both "the higher arts" and the things of daily life, such as school architecture, television programs, and billboards. Evaluations of beauty and ugliness fall into the aesthetic realm. Thus aesthetic valuation is a part of daily life and cannot be avoided.

The aesthetic experience is tied to the cognitive world of intellectual understanding, but also soars beyond the cognitive into the affective realm because of its focus on feeling and emotion. Aesthetic experiences enable people to move beyond the limits imposed by purely rational thought and the inadequacies of human language. A picture, song, or story may create an impression in a person that could never be conveyed through logical argument.

Human beings are aesthetic beings; thus, it is equally impossible to avoid teaching aesthetics in the school, home, media, or church as it is to avoid inculcating ethical values. However, the realm of aesthetics does not exist in a vacuum. To the contrary, aesthetic belief is directly related to other aspects of people's philosophy. For example, if subjectivity and randomness are embraced in epistemology and metaphysics, they will be reflected in both aesthetics and ethics. People's aesthetic values reflect their total philosophy.

Philosophic Issues and Educational Goals and Practices

Figure 1[10] (page 12) illustrates the relationship between philosophical beliefs and practice. It indicates that a distinct metaphysical and epistemological viewpoint will lead the educator to a value orientation. That orientation, with its corresponding view of reality and truth, will determine what educational goals are deliberately chosen by teachers as they seek to implement their philosophical beliefs in the classroom.

As a consequence, educators' goals suggest appropriate decisions about a variety of areas: students' needs, the teacher's role in the classroom, the most important things to emphasize in the curriculum, the teaching methodologies

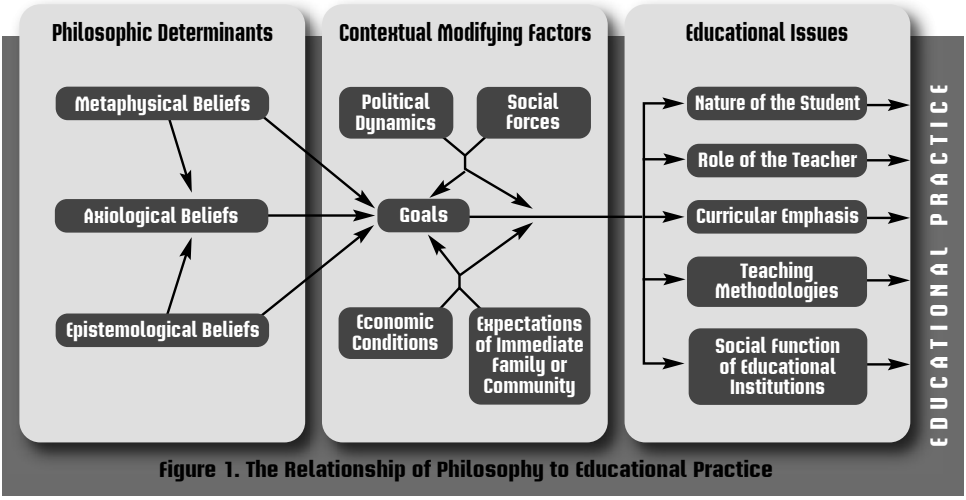

Figure 1. The Relationship of Philosophy to Educational Practice

that will best communicate the curriculum, and the social function of the school. Only when an educator has taken a position on such matters can appropriate policies be implemented.

As Figure 1 indicates, philosophy is not the sole determinant of specific educational practices. Elements in the everyday world (such as political factors, economic conditions, social forces, and expectations of the students' families or community) also play a significant role in shaping and modifying educational practices. However, it is important to realize that philosophy still provides the basic boundaries for educational practice for any given teacher in a specific setting.

Only when teachers clearly understand their philosophy and examine and evaluate its implications for daily activity in an Adventist setting can they expect to be effective in reaching their personal goals and those of the schools for which they teach. That is so because, as KNIGHT'S LAW declares: "It is impossible to arrive at your destination unless you know where you are going."

Corollary Number 1 is also important for every teacher and school: "A school [or teacher] that does not come close to attaining its goals will eventually lose its support."

Dissatisfaction occurs when Adventist schools lose their distinctiveness and Adventist teachers fail to understand why their institutions must be unique. Such teachers and schools *should* lose their support, since Adventist education without a clearly understood and implemented Adventist philosophy is an impossible contradiction and a waste of money.

Corollary Number 2 is therefore crucial to the health and even the survival of Adventist schools—and the educators in those schools. "We think only when it hurts." In too many places, Adventist education is already hurting. The greatest gifts we as educators can give to the Adventist educational system and to society are (1) to consciously examine our educational philosophy from the perspective of biblical Christianity, (2) to carefully consider the implications of that philosophy for daily classroom activity, and then (3) to implement that philosophy consistently and effectively.

AN ADVENTIST APPROACH TO PHILOSOPHY

Toward a Christian Metaphysics

The most fundamental and inescapable observation facing every human being is the reality and mystery of personal existence in a complex environment. Atheistic philosopher Jean-Paul Sartre raised that issue when he noted that the basic philosophic problem is that something is there, rather than that nothing is there. Francis Schaeffer, reflecting upon that insight, wrote that "nothing that is worth calling a philosophy can sidestep the question of the fact that things do exist and that they exist in their present form and complexity."[11]

Complexity is a key word in that sentence. Yet despite the complexity of existence, it does seem to be intelligible. Humans do not live in a universe "gone mad" or one behaving erratically. To the contrary, the world around us and the universe at large apparently operate according to consistent laws that can be discovered, communicated, and used in making trustworthy predictions. Modern science is predicated upon that predictability.

Another thing about our universe is that it is basically friendly to humans and other forms of

life. If it were intrinsically hostile, life would most certainly be extinguished by the ceaseless assault of an unfriendly environment upon relatively feeble organisms. The natural world appears to be made-to-order to provide food, water, temperature, light, and a host of other necessities that are essential to the continuation of life. The parameters of the conditions necessary for the maintenance of life are quite narrow, and even small changes in the availability of life's essentials would threaten the existence of life as we know it. Thus the continuing existence of life points to a basically friendly universe.

But is it *really* friendly? Clearly, one doesn't have to be especially brilliant to realize that many things are wrong with our world. We daily observe a beautiful world seemingly made for life and happiness, but filled with animosity, deterioration, and death. We are faced with the seemingly intractable problem of pain and death existing in the midst of orderliness and life. There appears to be a great controversy between the forces of good and the forces of evil that manifests itself in every aspect of life. The universe may be friendly toward life, but there is no denying that it is often antagonistic to peace, orderliness, and even life itself. Humanity's habitat is not a place of neutrality. Rather, it is often an arena of active conflict.

The problem we face is making sense of 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.

Some people believe that there is no ultimate meaning to existence. But others find it less than satisfactory to suggest that intelligence flows out of ignorance, order out of chaos, personality out of impersonality, and something out of nothing. It seems more likely that an infinite universe postulates an infinite Creator, an intelligent and orderly universe points to an ultimate Intelligence, a basically friendly universe points to a benevolent Being, and the human personality reflects a Personality upon which individual personalities are modeled. People refer to this infinite Creator, ultimate Intelligence, benevolent Being, and original Personality as "god," while at the same time realizing that this word is meaningless until it is defined.

But how to define *god* becomes a very real problem, especially when we acknowledge the mental limitations of the human race. Not only are we faced with our serious ignorance of the complexities of our immediate environment, but also with our inability even to begin to cope with the apparent infinity of time, space, and complexity in the universe at large. And obviously, if we have difficulty grasping the complexity of the creation, we have an even greater challenge in understanding the Creator, since a maker must be more complex and greater than that which is made.

And that reality brings us to the jagged frontier between metaphysics and epistemology. Because of our innate human inability to understand the complex reality of the world in which we live, the Creator-God has seen fit to provide a revelation of Himself, His world, and the human predicament in the Bible.

"In the beginning God" (Genesis 1:1)[12] are the very first words of the Bible. With those words, we find the ultimate foundation of an Adventist approach to metaphysics. Everything else is secondary to God's existence. God is the reason for everything else. And if God is central to the Bible and reality itself, He must also be at the center of education. An education that leaves God out of its program is of necessity inadequate. How could it be adequate if it leaves out of its approach to learning this most important fact?

But God not only exists, He also acts. Thus the Bible's first verse continues with these words: ". . . God created the heavens and the earth." The material world as we know it did not come about by accident. Rather, its intricacies reflect both design and a Designer. Genesis tells us that God did not create a flawed world, but one that He could call "very good" near the end of creation week (Genesis 1:31).

Two things are noteworthy about that "very good" statement. The first is that God created a perfect world. The second is that the material world is inherently good and valuable and not, as regarded by some forms of Greek philosophy, an evil aspect of reality. According to the biblical view, the physical environment we inhabit should be respected and cared for because it is God's good creation.

The final act in creation week was the establishment of a memorial that would remind humans of who God is and what He has done. "Thus," we read, "the heavens and the earth were finished, and all the host of them. And on the seventh day God finished his work which he had done, and he rested on the seventh day from all his work which he had done. So God blessed the seventh day and hallowed it, because on it God rested from all his work which he had done in creation" (Genesis 2:1-3).

The Sabbath is one of the first educational features in Genesis. A weekly object lesson, its observance by humans was enshrined in the Fourth Commandment (Exodus 20:8-11) and is relevant throughout human history. One of the final messages to be given to earth's inhabi-

tants before the second coming of Jesus is to "'worship him who made heaven and earth, the sea and the fountains of water'" (Revelation 14:7), an obvious reference back to the Ten Commandments and through them to the memorial of Creation in Genesis 2.

Central to Christian metaphysics are the facts that God exists and that He acted in creation. But He not only created birds and trees, He also created human beings in His own image (Genesis 1:26, 27). Of all God's creatures, human beings are the only ones made to be like God. Thus in its original state, humanity was sinless and pure. Beyond that, humans were created in a responsible relationship to their Maker. God gave them "dominion" over every living creature and "all the earth" (vs. 26). Human beings were created to be God's stewards, His vice-regents on earth.

A fourth important element in a Christian understanding of reality is the "invention" of sin by Lucifer, who forgot his own creatureliness and sought to put himself in the place of God (Isaiah 14:12-14; Ezekiel 28:14-17). With the entrance of sin, we find the genesis of the controversy between good and evil that we experience in the world around us.

Sin is bad enough in the abstract. But, the Bible tells us, it didn't just remain "out there" in the universe. Rather, Lucifer spread it to earth. How sin entered planet Earth and the human race is set forth in Genesis 3, which describes the corruption of humanity as a result of what theologians call "the Fall."

The effects of sin have been devastating to the human race. Not only did sin cause estrangement between God and humans (Genesis 3:8-11), humans and their fellow beings (vs. 12), humans with their own selves (vs. 13), and humans with God's created world (vss. 17, 18), but it also led to death (vs. 19) and a partial loss of the image of God (Genesis 9:6; 5:3; James 3:9).

Accompanying the invention of sin by Lucifer and its spread to humanity at the Fall is the reality of the ongoing conflict between Christ and Satan (often referred to as the "Great Controversy") that began before the creation of this earth and will not be terminated until the final destruction of the devil and his works at the end of the millennium (Revelation 20:11-15). That controversy dominates the pages of the Bible from Genesis 3 through Revelation 20. The focal point of this warfare is Satan's attempt to discredit God's character and to pervert human perceptions of His law of love (Matthew 22:36-40; Romans 13:8-10). God's foremost exhibition of His love was not only sending Jesus to rescue a fallen race but more particularly Christ's death on the cross. The Book of Revelation indicates that God's law of love will be an issue in the controversy between the forces of good and evil until the end of earthly history (12:17; 14:12).

The Fall of Genesis 3 is a central tenet of the biblical worldview. Without the Fall, the rest of the Bible makes no sense. Starting with Genesis 3, the Bible features both the results of human transgression and God's plan and efforts for dealing with the sin problem. As we will see when we discuss the needs of students, the Fall and its results are foundational issues in Christian education. They are, in fact, issues that make Christian education unique among history's educational philosophies.

Another aspect of a Christian metaphysic is the inability of human beings, without divine aid, to change their own nature, overcome their inherent sinfulness, or restore the lost image of God. *Lost* is the word the Bible uses to describe the human condition. The daily news reflects the results of that lostness in its continuous reporting of greed, perversion, and violence. And if the news were not enough, popular entertainment focuses on illicit sex and violence. The Bible describes the same problems as occurring even among God's heroes.

Of course, ever since the Fall, there have been people who have wanted nothing to do with God and His principles. But many humans have wanted to be good. Among them are those who make long lists of resolutions and attempt to live flawless lives, but to no avail. They repeatedly experience failure as their passions, appetites, greed, and natural inclination toward selfishness overcome their best intentions; and they repeat the dynamics of the Fall in a personal fall into sinful ways. Another group have achieved a fair amount of goodness or respectability through self-control and law keeping, but have ended up being proud of their righteousness. Included in this group are the Pharisees throughout the ages who smugly declare that they are better than other people, not recognizing their own blindness to their real condition (Luke 18:9-14). No matter how hard human beings try to be righteous, they still remain lost and confused.

As a result of universal human lostness in its several variations, the Bible pictures God taking the initiative for humanity's salvation and restoration through the incarnation, life, death, resurrection, and heavenly ministry of Jesus Christ. Evidence of God's initiative in the rescue plan of salvation appears throughout the Bible. We first find that initiative in Genesis 3:9, but it runs throughout the Old Testament and into the New, where we are told that "God so loved the world that He *gave* his only Son, that whoever

believes in him should not perish but have eternal life" (John 3:16). Jesus put it somewhat differently when He claimed that His mission was "'to seek and to save the lost'" (Luke 19:10).

An important aspect of Christ's incarnation is that it reveals God's character. "In many and various ways," we read in the opening words of the Book of Hebrews, "God spoke of old to our fathers by the prophets; but in these last days he has spoken to us by a Son, whom he appointed the heir of all things, through whom also he created the world. He reflects the glory of God and bears the very stamp of his nature" (1:1-3). Jesus is the fullest revelation of God's character. The Bible declares that "God is love" (1 John 4:8), but reading those parts of it that make Him appear to be less than loving makes us wonder about His real nature. The earthly life of Jesus, however, illustrates God's love and epitomizes the other attributes of His character. As a result, Jesus' character and life provide an ethical ideal for His followers.

Because of human lostness, God sent the Holy Spirit to implement His plan for restoring His image in fallen humanity. That work includes the calling out of a community of believers. The Bible pictures the rescue of the lost as a divine act in which individuals are born of the Spirit (John 3:3-6), transformed in their minds and hearts (Romans 12:2), and resurrected to a new way of life in which they model Christ's character (Romans 6:1-14). Each of those acts results from the work of the Holy Spirit, the third Person of the Godhead.

Those who respond positively to the Spirit's work become a part of the community of saints which the Bible calls the Church or the body of Christ (Ephesians 1:22, 23). But we must not confuse the Church and the church. The visible church on Earth is made up of members who may or may not be under the guidance of the Spirit. But the Church of God includes only those believers who have truly surrendered their hearts to God and have been born of the Spirit, who is central to God's great plan of rescuing the lost and restoring the divine ideals.

Some of those ideals relate to social action. God commands His people to feed the hungry, care for the sick, and seek in all ways not only to preserve the Earth but also to make it a better place. But in the end, He knows that even the best human efforts at reform will fall short of what needs to be done to clean up the mess created by sin. Thus, social action is an important function of God's people, but an inadequate one in the sense of eradicating the problem.

As a result, Christ has promised to return at the end of earthly history to put an end to sin and its results. At that time, He will not only feed the hungry but also abolish hunger, not only comfort the grieving but also eradicate death. The Bible pictures the Second Advent as the hope of the ages (Titus 2:13; Revelation 21:1-4). It describes the final act in the drama of salvation as the restoration of Planet Earth and its inhabitants to their Edenic condition (2 Peter 3:10-13). The Bible closes with a picture of the restored Earth and an invitation for people to join God and Christ in their great plan of redemption and restoration (Revelation 21, 22).

Summary of the Biblical Framework of Reality

- The existence of the living God, the Creator.
- The creation by God of a perfect world and universe.
- Humanity's creation in the image of God as His responsible agents on earth.
- The "invention" of sin by Lucifer, who forgot his own creatureliness and sought to put himself in the place of God.
- The spread of sin to the earth by Lucifer, resulting in the Fall of humanity and the partial loss of God's image.
- The conflict or Great Controversy between Christ and Satan over the character of God and His law of love, which runs throughout earthly history.
- The inability of human beings, without divine aid, to change their own nature, overcome their inherent sinfulness, or restore the lost image of God within themselves.
- The initiative of God for humanity's salvation and its restoration to its original state through the incarnation, life, death, resurrection, and heavenly ministry of Jesus Christ.
- The revelation of God's character in the life and teachings of Christ, which provides the foundation for Christian ethics.
- The activity of the Holy Spirit in the plan for restoring God's image in fallen humanity and His work in the calling out of the community of believers, the Church.
- The command of Christ for the Church to be socially active in the interim between His first and second advents.
- The return of Christ at the end of earthly history to put an end to sin and solve the problems that human social action could not eradicate.
- The eventual restoration of the earth and its faithful inhabitants to the Edenic condition.

Metaphysics and Adventist Education

The above discussion presents the basic outline of a Christian view of reality. Because Christianity is a supernatural religion, it is thoroughly

antithetical to all forms of naturalism, to those theistic schemes that do not place God at the center of the human educational experience, and to humanism, which purports that humanity can save itself through its own wisdom and goodness. Adventist education, to be Christian in actuality and not so in name only, must consciously be built upon a biblical metaphysical position.

A Christian view of metaphysics provides the foundation for Adventist education. Christian educational systems have been established because God exists and because His existence sheds light on the meaning of every aspect of life. Other educational systems have alternative foundations and cannot be substituted for Christian education. Belief in the Christian view of reality motivates people to sacrifice both their time and their means for the establishment of Christian schools. The same is true for Adventist education, which not only sets forth those teachings that it shares with other Christians, but also those biblical beliefs that make the Seventh-day Adventist Church a distinct Christian movement with an end-time message to share with the world. Adventist schools that teach only those beliefs that the denomination shares with other Christians have no reason for existing.

A biblical metaphysic determines what shall be studied in the school, and the contextual framework in which every subject is presented. As such, the biblical view of reality supplies the criteria for curricular selection and emphasis. The biblically based curriculum has a unique emphasis because of Christianity's unique metaphysical viewpoint. Adventist education must treat all subject matter from the perspective of the biblical worldview. Every course must be formulated in terms of its relationship to the existence and purpose of the Creator God.

Thus, every aspect of Adventist education is determined by the biblical view of reality. Biblical metaphysical presuppositions not only justify and determine the existence of, curriculum used in, and social role of Adventist education; they also explicate the nature, needs, and potential of the learner, suggest the most beneficial types of relationships between teachers and their students, and provide criteria for the selection of teaching methodologies. Those topics will be further developed in the second and third installments of these continuing-education study materials.

A Christian Epistemological Perspective

Epistemology, as we noted above, deals with how a person knows. As such, it has to do with one of the most basic problems of human existence. If our epistemology is incorrect, then it follows that everything else in our philosophic understanding will be wrong or, at the very least, distorted. We earlier saw that every philosophic system develops a hierarchy of epistemological sources that becomes foundational.

For Christians, God's revelation in the Bible is the foremost source of knowledge and the most essential epistemological authority. All other sources of knowledge must be tested and verified in the light of Scripture. Underlying the authoritative role of the Bible are several assumptions:

- Humans exist in a supernatural universe in which the infinite Creator God has revealed Himself to finite minds on a level they can comprehend in at least a limited fashion.
- Human beings were created in the image of God, and even though fallen, are capable of rational thought.
- Communication with other intelligent beings (people and God) is possible in spite of humanity's inherent limitations and the inadequacies of human language.
- The God who cared enough to reveal Himself to people also cared enough to protect the essence of that revelation as it was transmitted through succeeding generations.
- Human beings are able to make sufficiently correct interpretations of the Bible through the guidance of the Holy Spirit to arrive at valid truth.

The Bible is an authoritative source of Truths that are beyond the possibility of attainment except through revelation. This source of knowledge deals with the big questions, such as the meaning of life and death, where the world came from and what its future will be, how the problem of sin arose and how it is being dealt with, and the like. The purpose of Scripture is to "instruct" people "for salvation through faith in Christ." Beyond that, it is "profitable for teaching, for reproof, for correction, and for training in righteousness" (2 Timothy 3:15, 16). It should be apparent, then, that the Bible is not an exhaustive source of knowledge and never was intended to be a "divine encyclopedia." It leaves many questions unanswered. On the other hand, because it answers the most basic questions of finite humanity, it provides a perspective and a metaphysical framework in which to explore unanswered questions and to arrive at coherent, unified answers.

The Bible does not try to justify its claims, and thus must be accepted by faith based upon both external and internal evidences, such as the discoveries of archaeology, the witness of fulfilled prophecy, and the satisfaction its way of life brings to the human heart. Reinforcing this idea, we read in *Steps to Christ* that "God

never asks us to believe, without giving sufficient evidence upon which to base our faith. His existence, His character, the truthfulness of His word, are all established by testimony that appeals to our reason; and this testimony is abundant. Yet God has never removed the possibility of doubt. Our faith must rest upon evidence, not demonstration. Those who wish to doubt will have opportunity; while those who really desire to know the truth will find plenty of evidence on which to rest their faith."[13]

Seventh-day Adventists believe that the Bible teaches that the prophetic gift will be in the church until the Second Advent (Ephesians 4:8, 11-13) and that Christians are not to reject the claims of those who believe they have the prophetic gift, but to test their teachings by the testimony of the Bible (see 1 Thessalonians 5:19-21; Matthew 7:15-20; 1 John 4:1, 2).

Having done that testing, the Seventh-day Adventist Church early concluded that Ellen G. White had a valid gift of revelatory prophecy for the Adventist community that would help it to be faithful to biblical principles during the period before the Second Advent. That gift was not given to take the place of the Bible or to provide new doctrines, but to help God's people understand and apply God's Word as revealed in the Bible. "The written testimonies," Ellen White penned, "are not to give new light, but to impress vividly upon the heart the truths of inspiration already revealed. Man's duty to God and to his fellow man has been distinctly specified in God's word, yet but few of you are obedient to the light given. Additional truth is not brought out; but God has through the *Testimonies* simplified the great truths already given and in His own chosen way brought them before the people to awaken and impress the mind with them."[14]

It is important to note that Ellen White had a great deal to say about education in the context of the biblical worldview. As a result, we will quote her insights where they contribute to rounding out an Adventist philosophy of education.

The source of knowledge next in importance for the Christian is that of nature as people encounter it in daily life and through scientific study. The world around us is a revelation of the Creator God (Psalm 19:1-4; Romans 1:20). Theologians have given the term "special revelation" to the Scriptures, while they have viewed the natural world as a "general revelation."

Regarding the relationship between special and general revelation, Ellen White writes: "Since the book of nature and the book of revelation bear the impress of the same master mind, they cannot but speak in harmony. By different methods, and in different languages, they witness to the same great truths. Science is ever discovering new wonders; but she brings from her research nothing that, rightly understood, conflicts with divine revelation. The book of nature and the written word shed light upon each other. They make us acquainted with God by teaching us something of the laws through which He works."[15]

Yet even the casual observer soon discovers problems in interpreting the book of nature. He or she sees not only love and life, but also hate and death. The natural world, as observed by fallible humanity, gives a garbled and seemingly contradictory message concerning ultimate reality. The apostle Paul noted that the whole of creation has been affected by the Fall (Romans 8:22). The effects of the controversy between good and evil have made general revelation by itself an insufficient source of knowledge about God and ultimate reality. The findings of science and the daily experiences of life must be interpreted in the light of scriptural revelation, which supplies the framework for epistemological interpretation.[16]

The study of nature does enrich humanity's understanding of its environment. It also provides answers for some of the many questions not dealt with in the Bible. However, the investigative value of human science must not be overestimated. As Frank Gaebelein points out, scientific people have not produced the truth of science. They have merely uncovered or found what is already there. The "hunches" gained through patient scientific research that lead to a further grasp of truth are not mere luck. They are a part of God's disclosure of truth to humanity through the natural world.[17]

A third epistemological source for the Christian is rationality. Humans, having been created in the image of God, possess a rational nature. They can think abstractly, be reflective, and reason from cause to effect. As a result of the Fall, human reasoning powers have been lessened but not destroyed. God's plea to sinful individuals is that they might "reason together" with Him concerning the human predicament and its solution (Isaiah 1:18).

The role of rationalism in Christian epistemology must be clearly defined. The Christian faith is not a rationalistic production. People do not arrive at Christian truth through developing by themselves a system of thought that leads to a correct view of God, humanity, and the nature of sin and salvation. Rather, Christianity is a revealed religion. Unaided human reason can be deceitful and lead away from truth. Christians, therefore, while not rationalistic in the fullest

sense of the word, are rational. Bernard Ramm has correctly remarked that reason is not a source of religious authority, but rather a mode of apprehending truth. As such, "it is the truth apprehended which is authoritative, not reason."[18]

The rational aspect of epistemology is an essential part in, but not the sole element of, knowing. It helps us understand truth obtained through special and general revelation, and enables us to extend that knowledge into the unknown. In a Christian epistemology, the findings of reason must always be checked against the truth of Scripture. The same principle must be applied to knowledge gained through intuition and from the study of authorities. The all-encompassing epistemological test is to compare all purported truth to the scriptural framework.

In closing, we need to make several other observations about a Christian approach to epistemology:

• From the biblical perspective, all truth is God's truth, since truth finds its source in God as the Creator and Originator.[19]

• There is a Great Controversy underway in the area of epistemology, just as there is a similar tension in nature. The forces of evil are continually seeking to undermine the Bible, distort human reasoning, and convince people to rely on their own inadequate fallen selves in their search for truth. The epistemological conflict is of crucial importance because misdirection in this area will shift every other human endeavor off-center.

• There are absolute Truths in the universe, but fallen humans can gain only a relative or imperfect grasp of those absolutes.

• The Bible is not concerned with abstract truth. It pictures truth as related to life. Knowing, in the fullest biblical sense, means applying perceived knowledge to one's daily life.

• The various sources of knowledge available to the Christian are complementary. Thus, while all sources can and should be used by the Christian, each one should be evaluated in the light of the biblical pattern.

• The acceptance of a Christian epistemology cannot be separated from the acceptance of a Christian metaphysics, and vice versa.

Epistemology and Adventist Education

The Christian view of truth, along with Christian metaphysics, lies at the foundation of the very existence of Adventist education. The acceptance of revelation as the basic source of authority places the Bible at the heart of Christian education and provides the knowledge framework within which all subject matters are to be evaluated. That insight particularly impacts upon the curriculum. We will see in our later discussion of curriculum that the biblical revelation provides both the foundation and the context for all subjects taught in Christian schools. Christian epistemology, since it deals with the way people come to know anything, also influences the selection and application of teaching methodologies.

Aspects of Christian Axiology

Christian values build directly upon a biblical perspective of metaphysics and epistemology. Both a Christian ethic and a Christian aesthetic are grounded in the biblical doctrine of creation. Ethical and aesthetic values exist because the Creator deliberately created a world with these dimensions. Thus, the principles of Christian axiology are derived from the Bible, which in its ultimate sense is a revelation of the character and values of God.

A crucial consideration in a Christian axiology is that Christian metaphysics sets forth a position of radical discontinuity from other worldviews, in terms of the normality of the present world order. While most non-Christians believe that the present condition of humanity and earthly affairs is the normal state of things, the Bible teaches that human beings have fallen from their normal relationship to God, other people, their own selves, and the world around them. From the biblical perspective, sin and its results have altered people's nature and affected their ideals and valuing processes. As a result of the present world's abnormality, people often value the wrong things. Beyond that, they are liable to call evil "good" and good "evil" because of their faulty frame of reference.

Christ Himself was an axiological radical. His radicalism stemmed in part from the fact that He believed humanity's true home is heaven and not earth. But He did not teach that the present life is not of value. Rather, He claimed that there are things of more value, and that they should be the foundation for human activity. When one applies Christ's teaching, his or her life will be based upon a different set of values from the lives of persons who feel at home in the abnormal world of sin. To be normal in terms of embracing God's ideals will therefore make a Christian appear abnormal by the standards of the present social order.

Christian values must be built upon Christian principles. Thus, they are not merely an extension of non-Christian values, even though there are certainly areas of overlap. As noted earlier, the two major subsets of axiology are ethics (the realm of the good) and aesthetics (the realm of the beautiful). The absolute basis of Christian ethics is God. There is no standard or law be-

yond God. Law, as it is revealed in Scripture, is based upon God's character, which centers on love and justice (Exodus 34:6, 7; 1 John 4:8; Revelation 16:7; 19:2). Biblical history provides examples of divine love and justice in action.

The concept of love is a meaningless idea until it is defined. The Christian looks to the Bible for a definition because it is there that the God who is love has revealed Himself in a concrete way that is understandable to human minds. The Bible's fullest elucidations of the meaning of love appear in the actions and attitudes expressed by Jesus, the exposition of love in 1 Corinthians 13, and in the underlying meaning of the Ten Commandments. Even a brief study reveals a distinct qualitative difference between what "normal" humans refer to as love and the biblical concept of divine love. John Powell captured the essence of divine love when he pointed out that love focuses on giving rather than receiving.[20] It works for the very best good of others, even those thought of as enemies. In that same vein, Carl Henry has aptly written that "Christian ethics is an ethics of service."[21] Thus, it is that Christian ethics and Christian love stand in radical discontinuity from what is generally thought of as love by human beings.

That concept leads us to the ethical expression of God through His revealed law. All too many Christians believe that God's basic law is the Ten Commandments. That is not the position Jesus took. When asked about the greatest law, He replied that "'You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, and with all your soul, and with all your mind. This is the great and first commandment. And a second is like it, You shall love your neighbor as yourself. On these two commandments depend all the law and the prophets'" (Matthew 22:37-40). The Ten Commandments thus are an extension and concrete illustration of the Law of Love. The first four commandments explain a person's duties in regard to love to God, while the last six explain various aspects of a person's love for other human beings (see Romans 13:8-10). In one sense, the Ten Commandments may be seen as a negative version of the Law of Love, explained in a way that gives people some definite guidelines that they can apply to daily life.

One of the difficulties with a negative ethical base is that people are always seeking to know when they can stop loving their neighbor, when the limit has been reached. Peter's question in regard to the limits of forgiveness is a case in point. Like all "normal" individuals, Peter was more interested in when he could stop loving his neighbors than in how he could continue to love them. Christ's 70 times 7 answer indicates that there are no limits to love (Matthew 18:21-35). There is never a time when we can stop loving and cut loose and be our "real selves." That is the message of Christ's two great commandments.

Thus, the Christian ethical perspective is primarily positive rather than negative. That is, Christian ethics focuses primarily on a life of loving action and only secondarily on what we should avoid. Christian growth does not come from what we don't do, but is rather a product of what we actively do in our daily lives. And that positive ethic is based upon the new birth experience (John 3:3-6). Christians have not only died to the old way of life; they have also been resurrected to a new way of life as they walk with Christ (Romans 6:1-11).

Before concluding our discussion of Christian ethics, there are several more points to make. One is that a biblical ethic is internal rather than external. Jesus, for example, remarked that harboring thoughts of hate or adultery is just as immoral as the acts themselves (Matthew 5:21-28). He also taught that all external actions flow out of the heart and mind (Matthew 15:18, 19).

Second, the Christian ethic is based upon a personal relationship with both God and other people. It involves actually loving both God and people and cannot be satisfied with a mere legal and/or mechanical relationship. Of course, our relationships with others should be legal, but beyond that, they must also be personal.

Third, the biblical ethic is based upon the fact that every individual is created in the image of God and can reason from cause to effect and make moral decisions. They can choose to do good or evil. Thus, the Christian ethic is a moral enterprise. Unthinking morality is a contradiction in terms.

Fourth, Christian morality is not merely concerned with people's basic needs. It wants the very best for them.

Fifth, a Christian ethic, contrary to many people's perspective, is not something that interferes with the good life. "In reality, moral rules are directions for running the human machine. Every moral rule is there to prevent a breakdown, or a strain, or a friction, in the running of that machine."[22]

Sixth, the function of the Christian ethic is redemptive and restorative. Because of the Fall, human beings became alienated from God, other people, their own selves, and their physical environment. The role of ethics is to enable people to live in a way that helps to restore those relationships and to bring people into the position of wholeness for which they were created.

Aesthetics

The second major branch of axiology is aesthetics. It is an important function of all educational systems to develop in students a healthy sense of what is beautiful and ugly.

What is a Christian aesthetic? To arrive at a definition, several points need to be made. The first is that humans are, by their very nature, aesthetic beings. They not only appreciate beauty, but also seem to be compulsive creators of it. That is one result of their being created in the image of God. God not only created functional things—He also created things of beauty. He could have created the world destitute of pleasing colors, without the sweet scents of flowers, or the amazing array of birds and animals. The existence of beauty in nature says something about the Creator. Of course, one difference between the creatorship of people and that of God is that He created out of nothing (Hebrews 11:3), while humans in their finiteness must fashion and mold that which already exists.

A second point to note is that while creativity is good, not everything that humans create is good, beautiful, or edifying. That is true because even though human beings were created in the image of God, they have fallen and now have a distorted view of reality, truth, and value. Art forms, therefore, not only reveal truth, beauty, and goodness, but also illustrate the unnatural, erroneous, and perverted. Because the galactic controversy between good and evil has invaded every aspect of human life, it also affects the aesthetic realm and is especially powerful in the arts due to their emotional impact and their profound involvement in the intricacies of human existence.

A leading question in the area of Christian aesthetics is whether the subject matter of artistic forms should deal only with the good and beautiful, or whether it should also include the ugly and the grotesque. Using the Bible as a model, we perceive that it does not deal only with the good and the beautiful. But neither does it glorify the ugly and evil. Rather, sin, evil, and ugliness are put in perspective and used to point out humanity's desperate need of a Savior and a better way. In summary, the relationship of the good and ugly in the Bible is treated realistically so that the Christian, with the eyes of faith, learns to hate the ugly because of his or her relationship with the God who is beauty, truth, and goodness.

Dealing with the relationship between the beautiful and the ugly in art forms is vital to Christian aesthetics because of Paul's warning that by beholding we become changed (2 Corinthians 3:18). Aesthetics has a bearing on ethics. What we read, see, hear, and touch has an effect on our daily lives. Aesthetics, therefore, lies at the very center of the Christian life and a religious system of education. As a result, a Christian producer of art (which in one sense is all of us) ideally is a responsible servant of God who, out of a heart filled with Christian love, functions "to make life better, more worthwhile, to create the sound, the shape, the tale, the decoration, the environment that is meaningful and lovely and a joy to mankind."[23]

Perhaps that which is most beautiful from a Christian perspective is whatever contributes toward restoring individuals to a right relationship to their Maker, other people, their own selves, and the environment in which they live. Whatever obstructs the restorative process is, by definition, evil and ugly. The ultimate goal of Christian aesthetics is the creation of a beautiful character.

Axiology and Adventist Education

"Education," Arthur Holmes writes, "has to do with the transmission of values."[24] It is that truism that places axiology alongside of metaphysics and epistemology as a foundational reason why Seventh-day Adventists have chosen to establish and maintain a separate system of schools.

A Christian perspective on such axiological issues as ethics and aesthetics is an essential contribution of Adventist education in a world that has lost a balanced and healthy biblical orientation. The cultural tension in differing value systems is central to what David Naugle labels "worldview warfare."[25] James D. Hunter and Jonathan Zimmerman explore the explosive implications of those axiological issues in books with such expressive titles as *Culture Wars: The Struggle to Define America* and *Whose America? Culture Wars in the Public Schools*.[26]

Values education is a central reason for the existence of Adventist schools. And Adventist educators need to be both informed and active as they seek to transmit to their students a biblically based approach to values.

Adventist Philosophy and Education

The existence of Adventist schools is no accident. To the contrary, the church early in its history realized that because its philosophy differed significantly from other segments of society, it had a responsibility to pass on that philosophy to young people through the development of an educational system. That was a conscious choice built upon philosophic principle. The result has been the creation of an Adventist system of education that currently has almost 8,000 schools, colleges, and universities.

That system and the expense undergirding it can be justified only if the church's schools are faithful to the philosophic foundation upon which they were established. The best way, in the descriptive language of Shane Anderson, "to kill Adventist education" is to neglect those philosophic underpinnings.[27] For that reason alone, the study of the philosophy of Adventist education is of crucial importance to educators, school board members, pastors, and parents.

Thus far in our presentation we have examined the biblical philosophic position that must inform Adventist educational practice. In Parts II and III, we will discuss what that philosophy means in terms of the needs of the student, the role of the teacher, the formation of the curriculum, the selection of teaching strategies, and the social function of the Adventist school in the church and the larger world. ✐

POINTS TO PONDER

- Why is metaphysics so important to education?
- What are the implications of epistemology for the operation of a Christian school?
- In what specific ways can (or should) a Christian ethic shape your daily activities as an educator?
- Why is it that aesthetics are controversial in a Christian (or even a non-Christian) environment?

This continuing education article has been peer reviewed.

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12. Unless otherwise indicated, all Bible texts in this article are quoted from the Revised Standard Version. Bible texts credited to RSV are from the Revised Standard Version of the Bible, copyright © 1946, 1952, 1971, by the Division of Christian Education of the National Council of the Churches of Christ in the U.S.A. Used by permission.

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