

Views and Summary of metaphysics, epistemology, and axiology

Metaphysics answers the questions concerning the true meaning of reality. It is not merely enough to look around and see what is around us, but to delve deeper and examine the underlying aspects. There are different areas; these focus on the orderliness, origin, purpose, concepts of good and evil, the study of humanity, and the nature of existence and why things are. This area affects education in every respect because it causes us to question and closely examine our end purpose in life, what we would live and die for, what's right and wrong and how we can truly know the answers to that question. Metaphysics has a direct influence upon areas of what is taught, how it is to be taught, how the person being taught is evaluated in terms of their humanity, and the underlying assumptions of how we are taught to think and act.

Epistemology seeks to answer truthfulness and the certainty of it. All belief systems deal with the truth or some facet of it. This branch especially deals with unchanging truth versus truth that is subject to change, is there one ultimate source of truth or are there many sources of truth that are equally valid, can truth be truly known apart from our own experiences (*a priori* versus *a posteriori*).

Let's define these terms.

- *A priori* is a Latin term meaning "from the cause to the effect"; it refers to a type of reasoning that examines given general principles to discover what particular facts or real-life observations can be derived from them. Another name for this method is deductive reasoning.
- *A posteriori* is a Latin term meaning "from the effect to the cause"; it describes a method of reasoning from given, express observations or experiments to reach and formulate general principles from them. This is also called inductive reasoning.

There are several sources by which knowledge may be attained, although some can be viewed as more authoritative and accurate than others. Sensory data, although important, has been demonstrated to be incomplete; theologians rely upon divine revelation that is believed to be uncontaminated and complete. There is also the question of whose authority is accepted and why it should be accepted. Reason and intuition are also important but can be evaluated as being incomplete.

Epistemology is directly influential in education because it focuses on knowledge which has tremendous implications for theories, beliefs and practice. Presuppositions by both teacher and learner are also established in the learning environment, concerning what to accept by "faith" or reason.

Axiology deals with underlying values, such what is goodness or personal preferences. There can be conflicts between what is said and done. The area of morality and ethics is most commonly influenced here. Epistemology carries over into this field, because what a person believes will affect how he will act. Axiology affects outcomes of science, technology, the arts, music, the value of human life in all stages, and the treatment of values in society.

Axiology is influential in education because there has been a gradual change to accept the status quo after years of social upheaval and a moral revolution that has changed the face of society, and not always for the betterment of humanity. Our morality is predicated upon the assumption that we are moral human beings, capable of making right choices. But is this always the case? Education and the values we place upon so many areas of importance determine whether we are the agents of a destructive morality and treat others in such fashion, or if we are to be the agents of change for the betterment of mankind by what we say, think, and do.

Making a choice between these three, and my defense

I tend to prefer epistemology! I prefer the aspects of knowledge and what we have determined to be true or false. Because there is one stable, unchanging source of Truth, we can know what is certain in this life. I can teach my students the truth because I know Him Who is the Truth. He has revealed Himself in nature, although the effects of sin and the fall of man have tainted nature. In theological circles, this is called general revelation. We can look at the Creation and see the design of an Intelligent Designer, rather than the random effects of a violent creation that came into existence from nothing.

We also have the divinely inspired Word of God, which is God's special revelation to us. It is the written account of Who God is, how our universe came into existence, what our purpose and meaning in life is, and how our life has been affected for better or for worse. The fact that people are questioning relative versus absolute truth today is troublesome to me. There seems to be a wholesale abandonment of what is pure and right to following a "whatever is truth to you is not necessarily truth to me" mentality that flies in the face of authoritative truth (postmodernism). Society seems to be much more accepting of truth within themselves and that mankind doesn't need someone telling them what to do. (God is almost irrelevant; if He exists, I still don't care because I'm going to do what I want to do anyhow.) Somehow, human experience is the best teacher, and our knowledge of truth or error is predicated upon the belief that I determine what is best for me.

I have found that most youth believe what they believe because it's what their parents believe and there is nothing necessarily wrong with that. However, there comes a point, usually in the college years, when belief systems are challenged and truth (or error) is adopted as one's own; then values in life are lived out based on that worldview. The truly Biblical church can rise no higher than its ministerial staff and lay leadership unless both are committed to a Biblical worldview. There is room in church educational ministry for critical thinking while supporting a Biblical worldview as long as it is done in a supportive environment.

Today we have no need of sin, because what is sin for one person is not always sin for another. Sin is outmoded. There are many people, based on evangelistic work in which I have been involved, who have no concept of right and wrong, or even what sin is. I find that this branch of philosophy has been the most important with my teaching occupation in the past and where I desire to be in the ministry right now. When I was in the classroom, students were placed in my classes to be taught. Once I enter the ministry, I will be partnering with parents of youth and adult leaders in teaching Biblical truth and every facet of it. I must deal with differing opinions of methodology and authority, whose truth to accept or reject and why it must be thus. There is also a tendency to place human reason above all others, but when we have God's truth revealed through the Bible, we can

see that He has already spoken. Now it is a matter of accepting His authority above all others ultimately, and being willing to place ourselves under it.

Today in the ministry setting as well as in the classroom, we need to have an organized system of thought so as to make a consistent defense of what we believe. This is where epistemology steps to the forefront. If we do not have such a system, then we are at the mercy of individuals who have a non-Biblical worldview at their disposal. Because nature abhors a vacuum, then another worldview system will step in. What we can do in the classroom, in both church and school settings, is to develop a consistent Biblical worldview curriculum that has been organized so that inferences and conclusions can be reasonably drawn based upon that worldview. The human mind is not content with knowledge that is fragmented, or knowledge simply being the accumulation of facts. There must be a unifying and systematizing effect of that knowledge. That is where the successful and effective Pastor to Students or Christian educator steps into the picture.

Because the human mind is not content with knowledge that is fragmented, or knowledge simply being the accumulation of facts, there must be a unifying and systematizing effect of that knowledge. This is where the successful and effective Christian education ministry enters the picture. It will be my responsibility, along with my fellow partners in the ministry, to fully integrate what has been taught into the whole person, not just the mind alone. Never should a minister of the Gospel minimize his influence with his scholars when he takes a special interest in their overall well-being.

If our scholars have been trained and educated in a truly Biblical world view, then they will be ready to make a defense to everyone who asks of the hope that lies within, ready to give an account for the hope which they have.