



Intentional Objectives in Education: *Know, Be, Do*¹

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Until we come to grips with human behavior, we really won't be dealing with the issue of Christian moral and ethical value behavior. It is part of the problem that underlies this notion about ethics in curriculum. If it doesn't mean that then we may be just playing a kind of a little parlor game and concerned about who is teaching the right propositions. Clearly, there are Christian standards of behavior. There are Scripture-based propositions about what is appropriate and inappropriate for human beings, never mind Christians. But the frame of reference is laid down for all of humanity and it is in that violation of that frame of reference that we have the manifestation of sin in society—and the concern about ethical matters.

Education sometimes contributes to the problem because of intense emphasis on *knowing* things. Three key words are necessary in relation to intentional educational outcomes, before one can come to terms with ethics across the curriculum. One of these is the set of objectives we call *knowing objectives*: why are you here? You are here so that students will know certain things when they leave. But that is a partial statement; it isn't quite complete. There is also the word *do*. This word tends to present a troublesome epistemological issue in the Christian liberal arts college. In the frame of reference of the educator, how we view what it is to learn focuses either on knowing or doing or both. When liberal arts education makes anti-vocational claims, *doing* is de-emphasized, and *knowing* is emphasized in the same way that the ancient Greeks emphasized the knowing—as if assuming that what is in your head will certainly be in your heart, and your feet, and in your hands.

Do you really believe that the way that you change human behavior is to make sure that people know things? I find that an unsatisfactory position in my own life. Often I know better; or I do not operate consistently with what I know. Is that an ethical issue? Is ethics in the knowing framework or in the doing framework? Think seriously about that and you will see that the ethical implications of knowing are in the doing. There is something inherent in the liberal arts philosophy that tends to de-emphasize the doing; and it is one of the places where Christian liberal arts colleges have a special burden that goes significantly beyond what the general society accepts as liberal arts education.

The Hebraic view of knowing was fundamentally different from a Greco-Roman view of knowing. In a Greco-Roman view of knowing is manifested in performances that are knowledge related. What do you do when you want to find out if a student has learned in your class? Give them a test! A high percentage of what we do in testing is focused on a limited view knowing. It seems impractical to test performance. But it is in the doing where we come closer to a Hebraic epistemological framework; in other words, of what it is to know something. And often what we know is counter to what we do. The apostle Paul raised this moral dilemma in his own experience: "I do not understand my own actions. For I do not do what I want, but I do the very thing I hate" (Romans 7:15). Here is ample evident that it isn't enough to know God's righteous way and to desire to walk in it. A gap can occur

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between what we know on the one hand, and what we do on the other. The unfortunate problem in higher education is that we typically don't have the interdisciplinary relationships that allow us to examine the realms of knowing and doing as interconnected phenomena. Liberal arts philosophy tends to depend on the intellectual accumulation of that which subsequently people will put into life. We use language like "finishing one's education"; we talk about "when the student is done", when he or she is through school, which presumes that there is a knowing, accumulation, storing and filling stage in life. And then, somehow, the application stage of knowing comes later. But too often what was given a passing grade doesn't get translated into the doing.

But I would argue that from a Christian point of view, there is yet another word, the importance of which must be carefully considered in the curriculum—*being*. If knowing, doing, and being are important, consider the relationships among them. What is it to *be* something, in contrast to what it is to *know* something, or to *do* something? Even if all the *knowings* and *doings* are in place, what is ultimately important is *being*—what a person is. Now, which of these three outcomes is easiest to assess?

Knowing is typically a straightforward assessment matter. Doing is next, but at least it is observable, and can be assessed. How is *being* assessed? Even though a teacher may be deeply concerned about the spiritual development of students, he or she doesn't know how to assess it. Spiritual transformation, even the new birth, is something that we as Christians talk a lot about but we're hard pressed when it comes to assessment. Now we can assess the fruit of the Spirit but interestingly, the semantic of the fruit of the Spirit suggests that it's not mine or yours but what God is doing in us. How does one evaluate what God is doing in us?

One of the unfortunate characteristics of curriculum in higher education is that it tends to be organized around that which is teachable, testable—and quantifiable. This tendency is reinforced when students criticize teachers for emphasizing things that they're not testing. Further, "good students" tend to be those who can identify what is going to be on the test, and that is where they put their effort. But ultimately if we do what is easiest, we will never face the issue of ethics across the curriculum.

When we focus on ethics across the curriculum, we move from the measurable towards the non-measurable or at least less measurable. We have to be willing to get into areas that are not as concrete, not as specific, not as defensible. Each of you take two cards and write on each card what you think of as an important distinctive for your graduates—distinctives or evidences of distinctives you want to see after 2-3 years in the field. Don't limit yourself to the knowing distinctives. In other words, even though it may not be measurable, or easily measurable, it is still one of your intentions. For example, you might write: "After graduates have been in the field for 2-3 years, we would find people who are good participatory citizens in their community." How do you assess that? It's a value statement. It isn't a knowing thing all by itself. It isn't even a doing thing all by itself. It is a being thing. Now try to avoid the stereotypical generalizations such as "to be a good Christian". Try to be specific.

Read one of your statements: something you want to be true because of your collective efforts collectively. "Obedient to the word and will of God." Would you know how to assess that quality? "Have a servant heart especially when holding positions of power." Now comes the tough part. On the back of each of card, indicate what your contribution is toward each distinctives you identify. Be as specific as you can. "Be an example, a model, a standard of behavior or attitude." There is biblical warrant for that statement. The apostle Paul said do as I do. And there's a great deal to be said for

being aware of our responsibility to be exemplary people. I expect people to assume responsibility for their own maturing, but I do not want to be the kind of example that hinders their maturing. "Providing an encouraging context within which others can develop." That contribution would necessitate teaching a number of skills, for example, listening skills and critical reading. With your examples you are suggesting interaction between knowing and doing in order to perform a being. However, it would be easy for what you teach to lapse into something academic, a Greco-Roman simplicity in our educating. Only when we our intentions become a composite of unified behavior do we begin to do something substantial about the *being*.

Now the question of ethics across the curriculum, where should it focus? The right answer is *being*. But the problem is to ensure that your contributions are linked in such a way that we don't take the outcome of being for granted. We build bridges among those parts of our contribution that will contribute to a person's being a certain way because he or she is maturing as a Christian.

We may argue for a small campus, small class sizes, and so on. But sometimes what happens in the "small college" is that we take somewhat reduced mass behavior and let it remain as mass behavior. It takes effort to accomplish our intentions; it won't happen just because we're a small college. If it happens at all, it happens because we are a *Christian* college with carefully articulated and grounded values. Don't take for granted that these good things will happen simply because we are a certain kind of college. When they do happen, your good intentions will be accomplished because you are focused on given outcomes and you are willing to get into non-measurables.

Will someone read another card. "To be caring people and to show that to believers and non-believers." I hope you all could affirm that statement. But you know that intention is a lot like the city park, it belongs to everybody. Consequently nobody rakes the leaves. Sometimes until we take intentions down from the corporate level, or what's written in the catalogue, and bring them into the personal commitment level, nothing much will happen. Ethics across the curriculum is going to be a hollow idea, if it is an institutional commitment. It will become a functional idea if it's an individual commitment within the functional institutional framework.

The Bible colleges arose out of an ethic of concern for applied learning. More recently, many have become preoccupied with a value system of knowing with a vestigial requirement for field experience. In many cases, that field experience is never examined or discussed in classroom settings. What is required to have a focus on ethics across the curriculum? Acknowledge your corporate commitments and then work out the specifics of your individual contributions through interactions with students in the less formal structure; and through involvement in appropriate courses and appropriate times and places to explore the meanings of ideas in terms of the quality of Christian behavior.