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The Indoctrination at School Fallacy

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You can hardly read the news concerning what is going on at most university campuses these days without noticing an obvious pattern – politically liberal viewpoints are promoted and celebrated, while politically conservative beliefs are mocked and suppressed. There have been very high profile cases in which conservative speakers have been blocked from speaking to campus groups, conservative (and even some Christian) students have been harassed and their student organizations banned, and professors have actively promoted political liberalism in their classrooms and mocked students who didn't agree with them.

So all of this begs the question: Why should someone who is writing about Christian matters be interested in how politics are dealt with on college campuses? That is actually a very important question, and brings us to make a point – that the beliefs people promote in their lives are all based on some religious foundation. While some forms promote liberty, others promote an ideology that stifles freedom and promotes the persecution of people who don't agree with them. To be more specific as it relates to the beliefs we are looking at here, Christian Theism promotes liberty, while in Naturalism, politics and religion are one and the same and stifle liberty.

What is the Issue?

Generally speaking, all of the major institutions of modern American society are dominated by a naturalistic worldview – media, entertainment, government, business, and yes, education. There are cases where activist teachers and professors

actually teach that God does not exist. However, what we see most is that they teach "as if" God doesn't exist. The result is that students are completely immersed in an environment that attempts to make sense of the notion that the natural universe is all that exists, and nonsense of the notion that there exists a transcendent reality.

This would be bad enough if that was all there was to it. But that is not the case. In addition to immersing students in naturalistic philosophy, non-naturalistic viewpoints are often actually put down. Thus, students who believe in God are frequently shamed and ridiculed for their beliefs.

Thus, much of modern education is not education at all, it is indoctrination. Rather than being taught to analyze and evaluate competing points of view, students are taught that any viewpoint that does not conform to the naturalistic standard is false, and those who hold to them are ignorant.

This is, obviously, a problem for those who are Christians. The Christian viewpoint is based on a theistic worldview – one of the viewpoints that is not tolerated by Naturalists. In order to effectively confront this problem, it is necessary to understand not only why Christian Theism is true, but also why Naturalism is false.

The Presuppositions of Conflicting Notions of Indoctrination at School

A naturalistic approach to education is quite different from that of biblical Theism because the very purpose is different. And since the purposes are different, the end results, then, are also very different.

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Biblical Theism

In biblical Theism, the purpose of education is inform people of truth, and give them knowledge and skills to wisely use that knowledge to accomplish God's purpose for themselves individually, and for mankind in general. This starting point causes education to have a particular focus.

A Christian approach to education, of course, begins with imparting knowledge to individuals. This knowledge, though, is not simply for the sake of gaining knowledge, but is an actual search for truth. Biblical Theism acknowledges that there is such a thing as objective truth, and education is the search for that truth. Truth, though, is not just a matter of acquiring facts. Rather, it is the search for an understanding of reality itself. As such, it not only involves learning facts about the natural world, but also gaining an understanding of God and all of transcendent reality.

Beyond gaining knowledge, though, education must also involve learning how to rightly and effectively use that knowledge. It involves the application of experience, knowledge, and good judgment in order to make good decisions.

As biblical Theism recognizes the objective reality of God and his revelation of himself and his ways in the Bible, Scripture also has an important place in the education process. This does not mean that all knowledge that is possible to learn can be found in the Bible. But it does mean that the structure of reality as it is described in the Bible is true, and that the Bible's teachings form the foundation for effectively interacting in that reality. The Bible has numerous verses that speak to human freedom of con-

science. The following verses are all taken from the ESV.

Proverbs 4:13

Keep hold of instruction; do not let go; guard her, for she is your life.

Proverbs 9:9-10

Give instruction to a wise man, and he will be still wiser; teach a righteous man, and he will increase in learning. The fear of the Lord is the beginning of wisdom, and the knowledge of the Holy One is insight.

Proverbs 10:14

The wise lay up knowledge, but the mouth of a fool brings ruin near.

Proverbs 13:20

Whoever walks with the wise becomes wise, but the companion of fools will suffer harm.

Proverbs 22:6

Train up a child in the way he should go; even when he is old he will not depart from it.

Ecclesiastes 7:12

For the protection of wisdom is like the protection of money, and the advantage of knowledge is that wisdom preserves the life of him who has it.

Proverbs 29:15

The rod and reproof give wisdom, but a child left to himself brings shame to his mother.

John 8:32

And you will know the truth, and the truth will set you free."

John 14:26

But the Helper, the Holy Spirit, whom the Father will send in my name, he will teach you all things and bring to your remembrance all that I have said to you.

2 Timothy 3:16-17

All Scripture is breathed out by God and profitable for teaching, for reproof,

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for correction, and for training in righteousness, that the man of God may be competent, equipped for every good work.

Naturalism

At the most fundamental level, the beliefs of Naturalism have survival as its most foundational principle. Since there is no belief in any transcendent reality, and all of life is understood to have emerged by purely natural means, there is no objective moral standard that can be brought to bear on human society. As such the goal of education is not to promote some high moral goal, but only to put people in a position to most effectively promote the survival of the species. In other words, it is function, rather than truth, that is the ultimate goal.

That said, when it comes to promoting survival, there has to be somebody that determines the best way to attain that goal. Without some kind of guiding force, there would be nothing but chaos – which works against survival. Since no transcendent moral code is acknowledged to exist, it is left to human beings to determine for themselves the best way forward. And the particular human beings that get to do that are the ones who are able to put themselves in a position of power to pull it off. Ultimately, it is their opinions that determine the direction.

When it comes to education based on a naturalistic worldview, its purpose must also be to promote survival – a collective goal rather than an individual one. It is not up to individuals, then, to decide what they wish to learn, or to determine for themselves how to use the knowledge they gain. Rather, it is the leaders who have the power to determine society's direction, and who set societal goals. It is these leaders who get to determine what educational standards to set, and what content should be taught. Based on a naturalistic worldview,

the purpose of education is socialization – to get all of society on the same page, so to speak. As such, the morals, skills, and educational content are standardized for everyone with a view to maintaining order in society.

Is the Secularist View of Indoctrination at School True?

The truth is, human beings do have individual aspirations. This kind of individualism is a part of the very fabric of human personhood. Freedom is the longing of everyone's soul. Based on the secularist, naturalistic understanding of the nature of man, however, it is not the desires of the individual that must hold sway, but the "needs of the collective." A collectivist approach to education literally works against the natural inclination of the human person, and, thus, does not reflect actual reality.

What is the Answer?

In a nutshell, the answer to the problem of indoctrination in education lies in promoting the truth. Human beings really are persons created in the image of God with a built in inclination toward attaining freedom and truth. Naturalism contradicts both of those characteristics. In fact, its doctrines are not averse to actually using untruth and coercion as tactics to do it.

The counterpunch to that is to shout forth the truth. In a very real sense, the secularist view of education is like "The Emperor with No Clothes." And the proper response to that is exposing the falsehood. Christians should be on the forefront of that effort. The truth lies in the objective reality that God created human beings as persons with personhood characteristics that include free will, freedom of conscience, and an inclination to desire truth and freedom. It is by promoting faith in Christ and a biblical worldview in society that false beliefs are exposed, and the truth is moved forward.

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