

“Disappearance of Moral Knowledge on Universities”

Dallas Willard - LSU 2.18.08 (2 of 2) [1:30:26]

VERITAS - http://www.veritas.org/what-your-u-wont-teach-u-u-r-apt-catch-anyway/?view=presenters&speaker_id=1950

[Also see, “The Disappearance of Moral Knowledge”
by Dallas Willard, UCI Veritas Forum, 2011]



Scribe’s Comments - *The session was typed from the YouTube (audio only) with good-faith effort but it is not verbatim. The [brackets] & bold disclose the scribe’s commentary and also cross-references to other Dallas Willard teachings.*

Start (after introductory statements) [01:15]

- * Veritas Forum - Launched [at Harvard in early 90’s] because important truths were not being discussed.
- * Harvard Shield - “Veritas” - “Christo” - “Ecclesia” have gone but “Veritas” has stayed. We can be thankful for that.

TOPIC - “Moral Truth & Moral Knowledge: What Your University Won’t Teach You”

One of the least kinds of truth discussed.

What is it that your University won’t teach you?

It won’t teach you “Moral Knowledge: Good & Evil, Right & Wrong”.

Many people do not know this, especially outsiders to the University but many in the University. They still have the impression that somehow good & evil, right & wrong are taught in the University system. That’s a natural assumption. The history of the University was that it was one of the most important things to teach. After all, isn’t the University still the University? Things have radically changed. There are reasons it is no longer true that the university offers as knowledge a body of moral truth.

There is no department that does that. The closest you get to that is “Freshman Orientation” - that is largely because the University knows it can be sued for certain kinds of things. That’s a serious issue. A few things are discussed, perhaps in the classroom or handbook for example, plagiarism, cheating, stealing data. Among the students and those who enforce the handbook, plagiarism, cheating and so on is not dealt with as a “moral issue”. It is dealt with as technical issue under the rules of the University. People who offend against those rules are not subjected to moral opprobrium* and disapproval. Most people who are responsible for those rules and enforce them would think it is *immoral* to address them with *moral opprobrium* because moral opprobrium is a very painful thing. While there is not a body of moral knowledge made available but moral life goes on.

[*(def.) “contempt or disgrace”]

“Disappearance of Moral Knowledge on Universities”

Dallas Willard - LSU 2.18.08 (2 of 2) [1:30:26]

~ Morality is Taught at Universities

[6:05]

I want to say there is a version of morality that is communicated, not officially as knowledge, but tacitly by the way things are arranged in the university, body language, tones, looks, by what is selected for treatment and not selected for treatment.

You are apt to pick up a shallow and dangerous morality because you can't stop the moral life from going and you can't help communicate your beliefs. If you are an influential person in a responsible position, those beliefs will be communicated. People will receive guidance in their moral life without anyone saying anything about it. That morality that is communicated because of the background assumptions is not itself subjected to careful, rational evaluation and critique.

~ The Disappearance of Moral Knowledge

[7:40]

This does not mean there isn't any moral knowledge or that no one has it. It means that it has disappeared as knowledge content from the institutions of knowledge in our culture. Those institutions are generally the University and it's professional offshoots and, you may be surprised to hear me say, the Church. The church generally also no longer presents a body of moral knowledge. They have been undermined by the dominance of the University and it's professional offshoots, particularly through the Law.

Two Illustrations

[8:40]

Illustration #1 - University of Chicago Professor Mearsheimer, 1998

[*\[The Disappearance of Moral Knowledge, p. 30-35\]*](#)

“Two things the University of Chicago will not do:

First, We do not give you truth, we help you find it. Giving people truth is problematic.

{Willard - In education, I think it's more important to give people the right questions than the right answers. You can't handle answers unless you have questions in which to hold them. We need to cultivate people's ability to think. I don't think that it is inconsistent to give people truth when it is appropriate.}

Second, We don't give you any moral guidance.

“Disappearance of Moral Knowledge on Universities”

Dallas Willard - LSU 2.18.08 (2 of 2) [1:30:26]

{Willard - He’s thinking about traditional moral teachings. You can teach almost anything about morality if it is non-traditional and if you call it “political”. Politics doesn’t require knowledge. It simply requires advocacy. And that’s free game and that goes on all the time in university classrooms. Some professors are more disciplined and they don’t do it and they have my applause.}

See the journal *“Philosophy & Literature”*, Vol. 22, 1998, p. 137ff

For Wayne Booth & others - They discuss and provide readings and illustrations from history. Not “Show & Tell” but “Show & Not Tell”. You don’t tell, you try to get students to think it out and come to their conclusions.

That’s not what Mearsheimer said. He said, “We don’t teach that.”

When the others were done, his claims stood.

The reason you don’t teach that is because there actually is in their mind no body of actual knowledge to teach. You have to have knowledge to teach and there isn’t any.

Illustration #2 - The Making of the Modern University [14:10]

by Julie Reuben

[\[The Disappearance of Moral Knowledge, Willard, p. 26-30\]](#)

Administrative developments of 8 leading U.S. universities on how moral teaching officially disappeared from their Universities.

The short end of the story: Once theology disappeared from university curriculum, there was no place to locate ethics. Religion has always been interested in ethics. Apparently God is very serious about these issues.

After the Civil War when the universities were changing with great rapidity, theology disappeared. Partly because people realized it was not a friend of research. Denominations were defending stuff that could not be defended. Gradually it dropped out. Theology has disappeared into favor of “Religious Studies”. That left ethics and moral knowledge without foundation. Where would it be located?

[\[Expelling Jesus from the University.](#)

[Impeaching the Church from the Government.\]](#)

1st - They tried to locate it in the Sciences because sciences were above all concerned with truth. There were rationales - “*All truth is God’s truth. Moral truth is truth. Science is truth.*” It didn’t take but a few years to realize you could not do much with ethics from within the sciences.

“Disappearance of Moral Knowledge on Universities”

Dallas Willard - LSU 2.18.08 (2 of 2) [1:30:26]

2nd - Then administrators tried to locate it in the Social Sciences - social work & sociology. Social Sciences tried but they could not lay a foundation for “*Thou shall not steal*” and so forth. It’s quite a trick if you try to do that from Social Sciences.

3rd - They turned it over to the Humanities. You had a season where that looked promising. Matthew Arnold and others. Before long it was clear it would not fit there. So it disappears. It no longer has an administrative home. That makes it very clear that in fact moral knowledge has disappeared.

“Student Life” stands there holding the bag because it is such an important thing and can’t be given up concretely. There ought to be some moral regulations about roommates, how you take tests, and so on, but it does not come over now as “moral teaching.”

~ Moral Life Goes On

[19:08]

To say that Moral Knowledge has disappeared is not to say that morality can not disappear. It is too important. It’s one of the primary ways in which human beings view their own lives and the lives of others. *Moral sentiments, moral beliefs, moral traditions* - we’ve learned to respect them on good grounds. Bitter moral opprobrium flows. We now have a politics that is basically a politics of moral contempt. Listen to how people deal with one another. Morality keeps a presence. We can’t live without it. The peculiar kind of distancing, rejection and scorn that goes with moral opprobrium is the peculiar way we treat others in the moral realm is quite a peculiar range of reactions. These were not reactions that evolved or were based upon knowledge. That’s the great difference.

[20:45] In most schools, universities and public institutions up until WWII, there was still a wide acceptance of a teaching about morality that was fundamentally a refined version of the Judeo-Christian teaching about morality. It was accepted as such. People based decisions on it. Those decisions would be unchallenged. It was in a period after WWII, this is increasingly not so. The challenges to morality that began to be associated with religion and the issue of the separation of church and state begins to effect ethics, because after all, the Ten Commandments are in the Bible, right and isn’t that religion?

The confusion of religion and ethics continues up to today and there is so much of the literature around the University is a part of pushing morality out of the domain of knowledge. You identify ethics with religion, religion is not

“Disappearance of Moral Knowledge on Universities”

Dallas Willard - LSU 2.18.08 (2 of 2) [1:30:26]

knowledge so morality is not knowledge. It doesn't make a lot of sense often.

*** If God had given Moses the Ten Commandments along with the multiplication tables, we would not be able to teach the multiplication tables because they are in the Bible.**

People still make choices, they still have to be guided, they are often guided by moral sentiment, moral traditions and so on, but not moral knowledge.

~ A Case of a Failure of Intellect

[23:00]

* Robert Coles *"The Disparity between Intellect and Character"* article
[\[Disappearance of Moral Knowledge" pt. 2, UCI @ 46:00ff\]](#)

Story of a Sophomore student working woman being propositioned for sex by a student. He was making A's. She took two courses with him.

She asked the professor, *"What's the point of knowing good if you don't keep trying to become a good person?"*

What is interesting is how Coles interprets the problem in the case of the young man - the disparity between intellect and character. Everything you need can be in the intellect and not affect character. That's a popular belief. It's how we talk about BELIEF in religion.

We have a popular psychology that says there's a problem with connecting what's in your mind with what's in your heart. You can have it all right there in your mind and it have no effect your heart and on your behavior. Think about that way of understanding human behavior.

Coles is trying to understand the problem of putting into action what we have understood is good and right to do. No doubt there are problems there. But To put the issues of behavior entirely in terms of some alleged general disparity between intellect and character does not do justice to the fact that problems often may be due to what is not in the intellect. One reason why the intellect does not affect behavior because the wrong thing or nothing is in the intellect.

I want to suggest you might think about the young man who made A's and who behaved in a degrading way to his classmate is that there wasn't anything in the intellect to help him. Why was there not anything in the intellect? The courses he had taken were not courses which you would discuss in detail what was wrong in doing what he did. In the contemporary context it is very rare to find anyone who would be courageous enough and intelligent enough to talk in detail about what is wrong in sexual behavior in an ethics class.

“Disappearance of Moral Knowledge on Universities”

Dallas Willard - LSU 2.18.08 (2 of 2) [1:30:26]

For all of his virtues, Robert Coles, you can be sure, did not discuss that. When a young man who made A's in his course, does this thing, it isn't that the young man had the right stuff in his head and failed to bring it down to his behavior, he did not have the right stuff in his head. No one had taught him. No one had posed this case and said,

"What are the consequences of that behavior? Look at it carefully."

"Is it respectful of people?"

"What kind of a person would do this?"

"Do you want to be this kind of person?"

That's the kind of the thing that currently can not be discussed generally precisely because it is assumed we don't have knowledge of that kind of thing. We discuss - Is Kant right? Is Mill right? Did Aristotle have anything to say about it?

You can be assured Jesus Christ will not get mentioned. The single most influential person on Western Culture and ethics will not be mentioned because He is dangerous. It is not because He is religious. He is scary. If you followed His teaching, we would not have to spend millions of dollars dealing with sexual harassment in our culture. Did you know that He addresses that?

* USC anti-harassment training - It is not because of the peculiar ethical fastidious of the University. It is because they know they will get their pants sued off them. Not exactly a moral motivation but a very strong one.

* Robert Coles - The problem is not the failure of the intellect to connect with behavior but the failure of intellect, and the failure of intellect is not just the part of the young man but on the part of the teaching, or the magisterium of the University.

~ Why We Can't Teach Right & Wrong

[30:00]

1.) There is no Knowledge of Right & Wrong.

A lot of philosophers have worked on this. At least no one has shown there is no knowledge of right & wrong. The word that goes out that this has been demonstrated is very far from this having been demonstrated.

2.) The teacher would subvert the student's intellect if they taught right & wrong.

The idea is that when people get into right and wrong, they get all worked up and get biased, prejudice, pushing their views so we should stay away from it.

“Disappearance of Moral Knowledge on Universities”

Dallas Willard - LSU 2.18.08 (2 of 2) [1:30:26]

If that were necessary, we should. There is no special danger in this area that is not a danger in other areas. Other teachers of other topics can be pushy, not inviting disagreement or critical thought. Obviously, you could have a brutal, silly teacher that would do that - screaming at students for making a mistake, degrading them.

There is no special thing about the teaching of morality that means you can not teach morality what is right & wrong, good & evil without subverting the intellect of people. Historically that has often been done. Partly because morality has often been taught by people with religious views who have dogmatic views. I am saying that's not necessary. There is no good argument at this level.

3.) We must be Pluralistic.

That's a good point and we should. Why? Is that a moral "should"? I think it is and I think it should be. But the way to be pluralistic is not just to say "we don't know anything" or "everyone is right". Pluralism is a matter of holding opportunities open, of being considerate, thoughtful and careful. Pluralism comes out of the teaching of Jesus that you should love your neighbor as yourself. If you love your neighbor as yourself, you're going to be pluralistic. That doesn't mean everyone is right about everything, that there is no knowledge. It has to do with how you treat other people and how they treat you and what kinds of opportunities and possibilities are genuinely offered to help. Pluralism doesn't mean that everyone is right in morality anymore than everyone is right in French or some other subject matter.

~ We Actually Do Teach Right & Wrong

[34:00]

You can not *not* do that. You communicate attitudes, values. Any adult who works and lives with competence and authority and effectiveness is going to communicate values. You can not keep from doing that.

This is where the idea of the... **“Hidden Curriculum” - is the most forceful teaching aspect of a school** - what is taught to people by how life is arranged, how adults act, the body language, the way activities are set up, what happens in the mixing of students & faculty, students & students, faculty & faculty. Students learn this very quickly. They know that if they fall across it they are going to pay a price and they are likely going to be hurt very badly if they don't have the values that are actually dominating the way things are setup.

We do teach it. We teach the values that are operating. We need to think about - what are the values that are communicated the way our campuses

“Disappearance of Moral Knowledge on Universities”

Dallas Willard - LSU 2.18.08 (2 of 2) [1:30:26]

are run, the arrangement for living, behavior of administration & faculty before the students, how they treat one another?

For example, In many academic settings, “contempt” is a fine art. It is taught with great force, so much so if you don't know who to be contemptuous of, you will be an object of contempt. It is a long, wide range of different variables.

What to pursue?

* Mearsheimer - Critics realized he was advancing a certain view of success and prosperity for his students by telling them the wonderful things they would get out of a Chicago University education. It was the kinds of values you would expect in a consumerist culture - highly individualistic, directed towards with status and security. You can't live on those kinds of values very well especially with other people and possibly not yourself.

We do teach. It is impossible for adults in authority not to communicate their moral values.

~ We Can Do It Responsibly

[37:50]

To do that [teach moral values] it would mean we critically and thoroughly show the weight of reason that applies to the values we are actually living by. If we did that, that would be something worthy of the University. That would be using intelligence, information to bring to bear on the rightness and wrongness of acts of the goodness and badness of character traits in persons. That's the traditional role of moral philosophy. That's what Aristotle, Kant and almost everyone else did up to the turn of the 20th Century. Within a few decades that all changed and it infected and influenced the rest of the culture, especially academic culture because there was a backing away of the role of the University as forming people.

* “Loco Parentis” - The University is in place of the parents. Increasingly the responsibility for forming the minds and character of young people was backed away from. I'm not saying that's good or bad. I'm saying that's a fact. You can trace it out. That's a part of the story.

* Robert Coles Story

[40:00]

If the young man had been carefully taught to think about doing the kind of things he was doing, that would have pulled him out of a sex saturated culture and allowed him to start thinking in terms of values that he himself would very likely find reasonable.

“Disappearance of Moral Knowledge on Universities”

Dallas Willard - LSU 2.18.08 (2 of 2) [1:30:26]

—> The task of morality always has been to enable you to do what you don't want to do and to enable you not to do what you want to.

The role of morality is to direct **DESIRE** to what is good.

I understand the problems with coming to agreement on those things but those problems are much less than they are normally thought to be. You get thoughtful people together who can weigh the evidence on things and they'll come up pretty well what the rules of traditional morality have taught and they'll do it on a basis of good reasons. But we are living through a period where anything traditional is automatically suspect. That is above all true of the main source of ethics in the Western World which is the ethics of Jesus.

The Ethics of Jesus

[41:25]

The ethics of Jesus is an ethic of love - to love God with all your being and your neighbor as yourself. That's not the full story but that is the minimal version. Your life is to be a life of love. God is presented as the source of goodness. On the basis of that, you care for your neighbor as yourself. Which means you care for yourself.

Love (def.) means you seek what is good for the one who is loved.

* Aristotle - *"Self love means to seek what is best for you."*

That is not necessarily the same as what you want. Everyone knows you can want things that are not good for you...except for children.

* Parents have to teach children the difference between what they want and what is good for them. Actually, they learn that very well if they are given teaching and training and an example.

The ethic of Jesus is one that until the end of the 1800's was accepted as knowledge of what is good and what is right & wrong with appropriate refinements.

Jurgen Habermas, 1999

[43:45]

The ethic underlying European Civilization:

*"For the normative self-understanding of modernity, **Christianity** has functioned as more than just a precursor or catalyst. Universalistic egalitarianism, from which sprang the ideals of freedom and a collective life in solidarity, the autonomous conduct of life and emancipation, of the individual morality of conscience, of human rights and democracy, is the direct descendent of the Judaic ethic of justice and the Christian ethic of*

“Disappearance of Moral Knowledge on Universities”

Dallas Willard - LSU 2.18.08 (2 of 2) [1:30:26]

love. This legacy, substantially unchanged, has been the object of a continual critical re-appropriation and reinterpretation. To this very day there is no alternative to it. And in light of the current challenges of a post-national constellation, we continue to draw sustenance now, as in the past, from this substance. Everything else is idle, postmodern talk.” [47][48][49][50]

That would not have been a surprise 100 years ago. It came as a shock when it came across the internet. It is a simple statement of fact. You can confirm it in your own studies.

~ The Moral Basis of Justice is LOVE

[45:40]

A lot of contusion in the moral realm today is thinking you can have justice without love.

Justice will never do justice to justice.

Justice is not the end of the story. If you try to tell it as the end of the story, you won't get justice, you get a bunch of angry people. It is love that enables justice to flourish. Sometimes things are so bad we just need to worry about justice. But that's not the place you stop. You have to move on to love. The teaching of "love" is a word that ethicists will rarely say except when they are pushed. Some will use the word "benevolence" - good will. It means love. You can't say the word LOVE and you can't say the name JESUS. You try to think of something else. Nothing works very well. He brought us an ethic of love that can be based on knowledge. He not only taught us what is right and what is good, but responding to the motive of ethical thinking from the very beginning, He also shows us the way to actually do what is right, to actually be good.

* Socrates & Plato were primarily concerned about this. They were not just concerned to define "good". Plato said you could know it but not define "good". What he was concerned about was how to build a world in which people actually did what was right because they knew what was good. Aristotle in his own way was working on the same project.

* Stoics & Epicureans in Greek culture withdrew from the project because it was too big for them. They recognized that somehow human beings could not do it. They gave different advise as to what was the wise and provincial course to action which was basically...

"Cut down your expectations and stick to what was in your power."

Apparently creating a wonderful republic was not in your power.

Plato himself had suggested that.

“Disappearance of Moral Knowledge on Universities”

Dallas Willard - LSU 2.18.08 (2 of 2) [1:30:26]

JESUS comes and introduces us to a Republic which is already in existence and which we can enter which he calls the Kingdom of God. [48:40]

The Christian ethic which developed through centuries to be the ethic, in so far as there was one, that was not perfect and certainly not perfectly followed in European civilization, was an ethic that presupposed the presence of God in human life that would enable them to rise to the level where they could actually do what was “good” and what was “right” and not just talk about it.

Unlike the Greeks, that ethic dealt seriously with evil, not only recognized it but also understood it and taught about how to deal with it. One of the great weaknesses of our day is that we can not deal with evil. We have basically a platonic view that if people are into what is bad, what is wrong, all they need is education. That would be true given the education. What is the education to be? Obviously the one we’ve got doesn’t help an awful lot. That goes back to the central theme we have been talking about.

~ The Teaching of Jesus - “The Truth will set you free!” [50:15]

The teaching that enables us to do what he says. This is a teaching not about truth in general like aerodynamics. It is a bigger story. This statement is written on more University walls.

What is being discussed in this passage:

“If you continue in my words...” (His teaching, the knowledge He supplies)
- *“...then you are my students or apprentices, and you will come to know the truth of what I say because you bring it up against reality and see that it matches.”*

Truth is basically accuracy of representation.

What is He telling us? Things like, *“Love your enemies”* or start with *“Love people who bug you”* and move up to enemies later. Just put it into practice. *“Love your neighbor.” “Love one another.”* That means live in good will with those around you which includes yourself - you are your closest neighbor then your family and the people you work with.

“You will know the truth and the truth will set you free.”

That is to say - It will enable you to do the right and the good that you know and you will get out of that position of not doing what you know to do right and doing what you know to be wrong.

That’s the universal condition of human beings. They can’t do the good they know to do. That isn’t universally true, but it is generally characteristic

“Disappearance of Moral Knowledge on Universities”

Dallas Willard - LSU 2.18.08 (2 of 2) [1:30:26]

of human life. It is important to understand that the teachings of Jesus reaches that far.

“The truth will set you free.” Deliverance from the practice of evil.

—> How does that come?

It comes from learning to live in the community that is called the Kingdom of God - where God is in action. It is God reigning, governing. You find out what God is doing and you step into it. You do that by taking the teachings of Jesus and putting them into action. To do that you have to trust Him. You have to think He is worth trusting. You put them into action and that leads you to know the presence of the Kingdom of God in your life so you can actually learn to do what He said because it fits with moral and personal reality. That’s the truth, that’s how it works. That is an ethic that can be presented as knowledge.

[54:35] People of intellect and erudition today routinely reject the person and teachings of Jesus. They have him classified over in an area which makes Him irrelevant to life. They don’t give serious consideration to Him but live in a prejudice about Him rather than being thoughtful. [** - (def.) “Having great knowledge; scholarship”]**

* Illustration: Arguably one of the most significant, alleged events in human history is the **Resurrection of Jesus Christ**. Pretty clearly, if that had not happened, there would not be a Veritas Forum, a Christian Church. But you can not get a historian to look seriously at that on pain of their life. Now some have. It has been thoroughly examined. There is a lot of literature and teaching that comes out of that examination by people who approached it in order to prove that it was wrong. To my knowledge, there has never been a case of someone who approached it to prove it was right and decided it was wrong but there is a whole string of people who approached it in terms of the best historical evidence and have decided that it was right.

But they won’t touch it. If that happened, that will undermine the whole secular system of knowledge. On the West Coast, we brag about Universities in terms of being “secular universities”. That goes right in there with “research universities.” They go together.

* George Bernard Shaw - *“Catholic University is an oxymoron.”*

The idea was - if you were Catholic, you could not possibly be worthy of a University. You could not be open minded, thoughtful, critical and so on.

I will tell you, if “Catholic University” is an oxymoron, “Secular University” is ever bit as much an oxymoron.

“Disappearance of Moral Knowledge on Universities”

Dallas Willard - LSU 2.18.08 (2 of 2) [1:30:26]

There are open questions here:

?) Is “reality” secular?

We’re still waiting on a demonstration.

Frankly, the possibilities don’t look that good.

?) Can we stand on secularism as if it were a proven fact?

I don’t think so. In these matters, if someone says there’s a proof, we want them to present it. That is the way a University should work. Instead of that, there is a whole range of things that are simply written off, especially in the area of morality.

Responsible Intellect will [take you to] Jesus Christ & Proof of His Teachings

~ The moral teaching blindly conveyed by the practices of the University are very dangerous. [59:35]

They teach (2) things as ultimate values:

Pleasure sometimes mistakingly called ‘happiness’), and...

Freedom

Pleasure degenerates into sensuality. We have now a culture that is basically sensual - feeling is what justifies action. Value “good” does not unless you have a feeling about it. What do you want, what do you choose, what governs your freedom? In a sensual culture, it is pleasure.

That is what we teach by how our life goes in the academic and professional world generally. Sometimes other words come up like “success” or even “efficiency”. Fundamentally it is “pleasure” and “doing what you want” that governs the life that we teach.

> > > End of Teaching <<< [1:01:20]

...Q & A next page

“Disappearance of Moral Knowledge on Universities”

Dallas Willard - LSU 2.18.08 (2 of 2) [1:30:26]

~ ~ ~ Q & A

[1:02:10]

Q - What is at the root of the change that is taking place?

A - What is most fundamentally at the root of change is the changing conception of “knowledge” itself. Up until well into the 20th Century, it was possible to have an ethic where “knowledge” was based on intuition (G.E. Moore, Ross, Pritchard) of things that are not a part of the physical world. But with the rise of Positivism, which is not just philosophical movement but a cultural movement out of the 19th Century, and develops along with Empiricism for a while then takes a new expression side by side with Existentialism in the 30’s. I think that has had tremendous effects.

The problem here is at least as much as how we conceive of “knowledge” as how we conceive of “morality”. The shift in what counts as knowledge is really basic to this and to the proposition of trying to turn this around.

At the Universities I’m familiar with, we don’t talk much about knowledge. We talk about research. Research is defined in a particular way that does not allow for knowledge of good & evil, right & wrong. It allows for knowledge of behavior, opinions, surveys. You never take the position of saying from within sociology, much less chemistry and so on, what is morally good, right and wrong. I think that is the big issue. The problem really lies at the feet at people who are thinking about this more than anything else.

Q - Is it possible that there is an unwillingness to be obedient to any kind of authority that could lie behind our decisions about what counts as knowledge?

A - [1:05:00] I think that is right on. It lies at the spiritual level. It is the drive of human beings for mastery that underlies all this. If you listen to some who takes seriously against tradition or religion, it always comes up against “human mastery must be ultimate.” Human beings have this illusion that we can master nature.

* The “Faustian Motivation” back of modern civilization.

* C.S Lewis *The Abolition of Man* has a lovely discussion of why we can’t.

Simply, our choices will be controlled by nature if naturalism is true. Nature will master us through our desires and our choices and it will come in the form of the few people who have power to run the show. At the spiritual level, that is exactly where it lies - the desire for mastery.

Q - [1:06:30] What is the future for this trend - next 10-20 years and what is necessary for change?

A - You can’t think of a deterministic future on this. I believe it’s up to us where it goes from here. I think especially academic and intellectual people

“Disappearance of Moral Knowledge on Universities”

Dallas Willard - LSU 2.18.08 (2 of 2) [1:30:26]

are going to have to turn around their vision of reality and value enough where they will stand up and say, “We have to go in a different direction!”

I believe the leaders of the Church - Pastors, teachers and especially Christians in academic settings - are going to have to lead the way. That will mean possibly some real suffering because we’re going to have to take a bullet. Now, as far as I can tell, that’s all in a day’s work. We are certainly no worse off than when we were when this operation started 2000 years ago.

We have to see where this battle is. It is over this issue - what counts as knowledge. One hundred years ago the church basically turned knowledge over to the University. “*You do knowledge. We do faith.*” That’s where we are today. We are in a different business. If you raise an ethical question, that is equated with faith and that it is put out the domain of knowledge. There is hope but it’s going to mean individuals who rise up, occupy their calling to speak the truth and know the truth.

Q - [1:08:40] The Church is transferring everything to the political setting. We are moving away from “My Kingdom is not of this world.” How do we balance this transfer of the current generation in a truthful manner before they get to the University and go back to the church to teach people knowledge?

A - [1:10:05] I don’t have a very glorious answer.

We simply need to do the hard work both of following Christ and of careful inquiry and research. We have to think about them in such a way that they are not disconnected or incompatible. We need to have people in all settings who are serious disciples of Christ in the Kingdom of God when they are scientists, teachers, scholars, intellectuals, pastors and we need simply to apply the standard of truth and fair inquiry all the way down the line, to the Church above all. The Church falls into traditions that are not after Christ. We need people in churches, as well as the universities and governments throughout society who will see to it that people know what truth is and how to follow it. I think that’s the answer.

Q - [1:11:30] We teach “ethics” in LSU medical school. We cultivate an ethic. Aristotle did to include humility or benevolence. Is it possible without incorporating Christian morality to come to a common morality of what is a good person?

A - [1:13:45] Yes but it is possible to have a lot of disagreement. In our culture, We have tended to restrict knowledge to what you can not disagree

“Disappearance of Moral Knowledge on Universities”

Dallas Willard - LSU 2.18.08 (2 of 2) [1:30:26]

about. That's a terrible mistake. That lays an impossible burden on knowledge.

* Reuben, *The Making of the Modern University*

- *"Rethinking the issue of what counts as knowledge."*

Your question has a bearing on your earlier statement - teaching ethical knowledge makes most people back away from treating behavior as "morally wrong". Medically wrong, yes. My sense is that not many people would say because of this [behavior] that they are morally bad. That is where the hang up is. Often, *"We can't agree on what moral goodness is, moral rightness is."*

In the case of professional ethics, they are many things that are so obviously bad. Like plagiarism and cheating in the university. You'll hear people who stay far away from moral knowledge insist these things are wrong and the reason they give is because they spoil the whole operation. We know that cheating is epidemic and people lie on applications and other forms. But it's not their sense they are morally bad because of that. The professions are so closely tied to a public good, you can mark people off if they don't do certain kinds of things in law, medicine, and some other areas, even a questionable profession like journalism. There's some things you don't do like making up stories. There are some people who do and gotten Pulitzers. If you watch their behavior, they don't think of themselves as being morally bad.

You just don't pass people on if they do certain things because the issue is so important you can make it stand up. But if you were try to put it on a moral basis, you would probably be shot down because it is associated with something like religion. If it were pulled into court on that basis, it would not stand up. It won't be because it is so important. It still leaves standing the issue. We have to find another standard of knowledge than "agreement".

Knowledge (def.) "If you are able to represent something as it is on an appropriate basis of thought and experience."

But you can't make people agree with you. There are all sorts of reasons why people disagree about things that are actually subjects of knowledge.

Q - [1:18:50] Satan knows the difference between good & evil, without Christ how can we live a life of righteousness?

A - [1:19:20] - What I am not saying is not that there is no problem here. What I am saying is that there are other problems. One is that we don't convey moral knowledge in our teaching to people. We now have a culture that has really disconnected understanding from behavior. We have to deal with both of those. It may well be that part of the knowledge that is required will come from Christ. If the young man [Coles story] had listened to Christ he would not have done that.

“Disappearance of Moral Knowledge on Universities”

Dallas Willard - LSU 2.18.08 (2 of 2) [1:30:26]

Q - [1:20:48] Is this an evolution of an idea or is there an intelligence that is driving us culturally now to think there is no ability to know?

A - [1:21:02] - I'm not sure what intelligence you have in mind. More likely a stupidity than an intelligence. That's possible, too. A lot of things run from stupidity. I don't think there is a conspiracy. My assessment - Folks in the universities, researchers, professional people by and large want to do what is good & right but they always, unfortunately, find reasons that deflect them from that.

One of the important ones [reasons] in our time is the idea that academic culture has divorced itself from Jesus Christ. That is a major thought that you can not bring up that name. I like to counter that by saying look at His consequences, you might figure out that He is the most intelligent man that ever lived. If you think He isn't, suggest who is.

There is some discussion there. There are a lot of things that if He were all that intelligent there are a lot of things He didn't do. He did not give the relativity equations to James & John. He have to put it in Roman Numerals and that's hard.

Q - [1:23:30] Expound on “Separation of Church & State”

A - [1:23:40] That is how some of it has come down. Separation of Church & State as it was understood for generations, it is a valid and important concept. I'm not suggesting a Theocracy. But it came to mean something else. When that became a social and legal reality in the 50's & 60's, there had already been a cultural decision that the church didn't have anything to say anyway. If it had not been previously decided that what the church gives is not knowledge, there would not have been an issue of keeping Bible & prayer out of schools.

If it were thought that religion communicates essential knowledge of life, there would be no more question of separation of Church from State in it's current form than there would be of separating Chemistry from State. It is the prior growth of the idea that in religion and morality, we are not dealing with knowledge that then turns the issue of Church into one political tradition that is in danger of swamping the others, therefore it becomes a legitimate concern in a pluralistic society.

“Disappearance of Moral Knowledge on Universities”

Dallas Willard - LSU 2.18.08 (2 of 2) [1:30:26]

It is the prior assumption I'm trying to get at. If that is reversed, and a different understanding comes, you still have to deal with the issues of church and state as that was understood.

[The founding fathers did not mean what we do with the “Separation of Church & State” because the source of their moral knowledge was God, the Bible & theology. The separation was for the purpose of freedom of religion but not freedom from religion because religion - faith in God through Jesus Christ - was the source and the means to Life, Liberty and the pursuit of Happiness.”]

Q - [1:26:30] How do we relate teaching moral knowledge in the hard sciences? What would I say different in the classroom other than examples of famous Christian scientists?

A - [1:27:30] In many areas much of what we teach today would be the same. The physical sciences do not directly concern good and evil, right and wrong. The personal lives of scientists do. You teach by example. There are things in mathematics you don't deal with moral issues because it is not in the subject matter. How it impinges on the subject matter is a further question. Are there questions in mathematics or the sciences that push you over into questions of religion and questions of morality? In most occasions I don't think it will come up.

Reuben, *The Making of the Modern University* - It is interesting to note in the book that it was assumed that when morality lost it's foundation in theology, the most likely people to take it over would be the Sciences because the Sciences were devoted to truth. They thought it would be the example of the scientists would set the moral tone because of their devotion and integrity with reference to the truth.