

WHERE CAN WISDOM BE FOUND?

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Where can wisdom be found? How do theological education and wisdom relate? And how might we improve that relatedness?

I am a philosopher interested in reminding people that we are philosophical by human birthright and in sharing philosophical reflection, which is restorative and world-opening for all of us. I'm convinced that philosophy is concrete; it is bodily lived and felt. But philosophizing always involves splashing in the depths of mysterious beginnings.

I believe that epistemology (how we know) and metaphysics (what there is) concern us most deeply, in our most fundamental orientation to the real. We're shaped in a natural version of this in our very young childhood. But growing up amid the skewed philosophical outlook of modernity blinds us to our most natural way of knowing and being.

Over the years of my own quest for the real, I have developed some proposals, from which I consider this matter of wisdom.

By "modernity," I mean an outlook on knowing and the real forged in the 1600s, characterized by a preoccupation with knowledge as power to the end of pragmatic mastery of nature. The outlook persists and grows ever more strident. In the prevailing winds of modernity, we all are inclined to presume that gaining knowledge is a matter of collecting correct information. The presumed goal is a comprehensive collection of certainties. Christian believers are not immune to modernist epistemology; we can construe the goal as comprehensive Christian information. It drives us to pursue more and more Bible knowledge, sermons, and studies, including theological education.

Also in modernity, graduate study has the implicit agenda of producing experts—experts being scholars on top of the information in their field, a field distinct from that of all other experts. To be an expert is to be a master of a collection of information. This process also commends in its participants a posture of critique with respect to all matters one might inquire into.

On this knowledge-as-information epistemic, where can wisdom be found? Where indeed can even the love of Jesus be found? These precious pearls get consigned to a realm outside the walls of knowledge. They are a matter of piety and of morals, not knowledge. If "the fear of the Lord is the beginning of wisdom" (Prov 1:7), then the fear of the Lord must be about piety and morals.

Our fabricated modernist imagination dominates our generally unexamined view of knowing. Apart from direct challenge and positive and persistent epistemological therapy (*not* more information!), we presume it in all our ventures to learn and understand. The skewed epistemic is especially jarring when it prevails in theological education, with the lamentably common result of a seminary being renamed a cemetery. Among a plethora of other damage, such as dehumanization, the modernist picture is intrinsically atheistic—because it is "a-reality."

Short of an epistemological overhaul, no amount of balancing add-ons or qualifications will actually dispel this imagined, damaging vision. The outlook itself must be dispelled and redrawn. You may see yourself as having dispelled it and seeing knowing more wholistically. But if you have, you can be sure that most everyone else you might speak with has not.

Where can wisdom be found? There is implied a prefatory question: Where can a healthy epistemology be found? We need one that will do more than compensate for modernity's skewed presumption. We need an epistemology that will dispel it entirely and restore us to ourselves. We need one that makes sense of wisdom as knowledge—not to mention of how we ride a bike. **D**



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