
BOOK REVIEW

PRACTICE AND PROFILE CHRISTIAN FORMATION FOR VOCATION

By Johan Hegeman, Margaret Edgell, and Henk Jochemsen
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Faith integration, Christian moral development, and aiding students to live successfully for Christ in increasing pluralistic societies are central to our purpose in Christian Higher Education. Hegeman, Edgell, and Jochemsen, tackle these issues through their PISA model of moral development, an approach built on understanding worldviews. The quite impressive list of endorsers provide two keen insights into this work—the first regarding the usefulness of the model—as is noted by almost every endorser. The second is most notably written by a philosophy professor in his comment about this content-dense tome:

“... Anyone unwilling to accept this situation [professional and worldview education not touching each other] does well to read this book. It takes some effort, but this effort pays off.”

His comment is quite accurate. Give yourself time and a bottle of aspirin as the discussion of the simple and workable model is quite deep and European in style. They thoughtfully provide a list of abbreviations for key terms. It is content density, not organization, which makes this a slow read. Using a numeric outline model—1.1,

1.2.1, etc.—the authors’ carefully sequence their arguments so the reader always knows where he is. Beginning with their “Quest” for a useful model, then the explanation of each component of the model, and concluding with suggestions for application, this is a deeply philosophical work from beginning to end. It is extensively referenced with a supporting bibliography over 14 pages long. Many journal-based sources are in Dutch and German. If your interest is moral development and worldview analysis, the literature review is worth the price of the book alone.

Pluralism is a common reality for both U.S. and European Christian educators. The authors are concerned that students graduating from Christian institutions are learning about a Christian worldview but leaving without integrating a Christian worldview into their thinking and decisions. Part of their impetus for this work is the experience of employers in the European marketplace having an increasingly difficult time hiring new employees with both professional competence and moral competence, the ability to make appropriate professional choices and decisions in the workplace. Hegeman, Edgell, and Jochemsen hope to aid their Christian colleagues

in the process of not simply teaching about Christian worldview but embedding it into the hearts, minds, and hands of our graduates. However, this is no theological or biblical argument for Christian professional ethics. This is a closely reasoned, heavily supported, rational argument for an educational process for a Christian worldview without direct reference to Scripture.

The first chapter—Quest for a Moral Profile of Vocation—provides the foundational content for model and previews the rest of the book. In this discussion they are their most philosophical laying out their understanding of worldview, moral formation, and the practice of deep reflections. [The pragmatics of their work comes in chapters 2-6.] This moral profile involves understanding core beliefs, developing discernment, and understanding of the norms, values, and virtues central to their specific profession. Hegeman, et al strive to ensure that students have integrated their head (knowledge), heart (affect), and hands (actions) with their personal spirituality in the application of biblical principles within their professions

Deep reflection is the contemplation on the core of one's identity—core beliefs, spirituality, and narratives. It is an intentional learning process of interpretation of one's experience, knowledge, and beliefs. In essence it is the careful and intentional thinking about what is most important in one's life. Deep reflection is consciously understanding in terms of one's worldview and as a result actively choosing a moral profile. Key to this development is the engagement of the faculty as teacher, mentor, and guide. Their model extends teaching beyond the classroom to active involvement in the student's life.

As part of the underpinning of their model are a critique current of ethical training in professional education and a historical review of where education lost its way in character development. It is in the critique and solution one can easily become lost in the philosophical discussion. At this point the European style becomes intrusive. In their thoroughness of explanation we are treated to a historical and philosophical discussion and

we must trust the authors to lead us out of the underbrush and back to the model and its application.

The solution is the recapture of the original purpose of *Bildung*, the character and moral formation of an individual by their culture. Part of this process is learning to differentiate yourself your culture and “seek out the new, even that which might conflict with one's cultural values.” Originally, because of the Christian foundation of European education, this was a process of making one more secure in their own beliefs as they uncover deeper truths. The *Bild* or image of the process was to be the image of Christ. Fundamentally, if we transform the individual we will transform the culture, is the argument. This message was lost as education was reshaped by the Renaissance and the development of the image of Christ in the educated man was diluted to “coming into one's own,” due to the influence of humanist thought.

Hegeman, Edgell, and Jochemsen conclude this “Quest” by raising nine challenges ranging from meeting the modern desire for self-determination to virtues of competency-based learning and appreciation of “deep reflection” as a learning method. After the ninth challenge they introduce the model summary explanations of each element. Having waded through the first chapter one may be tempted to skip to the final implementation chapter, Chapter 6, I did initially. Yet each subsequent chapter provides rich detail and content for understanding and applying the four components of the model. The meat of the book comes in the next four chapters as the Hegeman, Edgell, and Jochemsen walk through the PISA model—P: Practice minded; I: Integra; S: Spiritual; and A: Answerable.

These four components are pieces of a general educational model for developing an integrated ethic. The P: Practice Minded—focuses on the professional, discipline-related elements of the ethic. There is no overtly Christian element here. The concept is that when we properly prepare our students they will understand the moral, ethical

issues of their chosen professional discipline. The student will have the executable and knowledge competencies to be successful while understanding the moral expectations and professional valued virtues of their field.

I: Integral—is the process of ensuring one’s personal values, beliefs, and virtues align with those of their chosen field. It is being conscious of and making choices from one’s moral frame of reference. It is here one’s “narrative” comes into play—one’s life story. The faculty member mentors and guides the student in part by telling his/her own narrative. At this point the student learns through CBL to tie their head (thinking), their heart (emotions), and their hands (actions) together to perform both competently and ethically congruent with which they are as a person. Being Integral requires the honing of one’s deep reflection skills so that they will always learn and act intentionally rather than by rote or circumstance.

Being Spiritual—the S of PISA—is the most direct discussion of faith. Cautioning the reader regarding the current trends in the use of “spirituality” as a catch-all concept and noting the students at Christian colleges already take required courses of religion, worldview, and faith movements, the authors see spirituality as “how a person answers the question of meaning and purpose.” Declaring a Reformed Christian perspective the authors’ are not concerned with the specifics of individual practices but rather the role of spirituality in the moral and ethical development of the student. At the end of this chapter the authors develop the theology of their approach. They openly express their Reformed, Evangelical perspective and the ramifications of that for their view of the educational development of the moral profile of the professional student.

The final component of the model—A: Answerable—is profound in its simplicity and probably the second most overtly “Christian” com-

ponent of the model—accountability for one’s choices. In a world which lays the blame for bad, illegal, unethical choices and actions at someone else’s doorstep rather than that of the professional making the decision, this component establishes a strong contrast with traditional professional ethics training and education. Here we return to a deep philosophical discussion of moral and psychological theory as Hegeman, Edgell, and Jochemsen lay out the elements of a truly “Answerable” professional. Once again we return the CBL model and reflection. It is in the use of deep reflection that the student under the guidance of the mentoring faculty member understands what it requires to be answerable and why it is important.

Concluding by recommending a process of implementation, the authors rightly note it must take place at three levels—the institution, the curriculum, and the individual. Rather than provide specifics, they remain with their philosophical perspective by posing key questions at each level and the probable consequences of the answers. If you are looking for a strategic plan for application you will not find it. However, the questions provide a tool for institutional “deep reflection” if you will. They provide a framework for intentionality in the process of educating and training for Christian moral development.

Practice and Profile: Christian Formation for Vocation is a substantive effort at thinking through an intentional model for moral development. While European in style and example and more philosophical and psychological in development than theological or biblical, the authors do introduce a critical element to Christian professional education. Are we educating, training our graduates to be integrated professionals who have the professional competencies to be successful AND are thoroughly conscious and intentional about their moral choices and their faith in Jesus Christ?