

# Ohio State *Veritas*:

Theme: What Does It Mean To Be Human?

- Human beings are responsible for their future.
- They determine what their future will be and who they will be by what they do now.
- The Human Burden: **To find an adequate knowledge basis for life.**

# What is Knowledge?

Our ability to represent things as they are, on an appropriate basis of thought and experience. Knowledge involves truth.

NOTE: We must define knowledge in such a way that it does not presuppose answers to substantial questions. For example, does not presuppose secularism or naturalism, or their opposites.

# What is Truth?

A thought or statement is true if what it is about is as that thought or statement represents it.

# The University's Role

- “Standard 1:A of the WASC handbook is: **Integrity in the pursuit of truth.**
- The first sentence under that standard is: “An institution of higher education is, by definition, dedicated to the search for truth and its dissemination.”
- Later: “Those within an educational institution have as a first concern, knowledge, evidence, and truth.”

# Belief

- Belief is readiness to act as if what you believe were true.
- We often believe what we don't know and even fail to believe what we do know. Such is human life.
- Leadership requires followers to believe that leaders KNOW, that the leader has TRUTH.
- Thus, mere rumors of knowledge are often used by leaders to govern belief and action in individual and group life. – Remember Enron, etc.

- Our contemporary society with its “news” is a thriving rumor mill: rumors touted as knowledge by “experts.”
- The danger is that our beliefs and our policies will be based on mere rumors of knowledge, and not on knowledge.
- Rumors of knowledge originate from those who have authority in our culture.
- But they often are responses to desire and will, not necessarily to truth.

# The Four Great Questions Of Human Life

- The nature of reality?
- Who is well-off?
  - Blessedness
  - The Good Life
- Who is a “really good” person?
- How to become a “really good” person

Buddha, Plato, Freud, Derrida, Oprah, etc. etc.  
Of course these questions should always be open  
to the most serious and searching inquiry.

# The University Gives Answers To These Questions

- Not in a straightforward and responsible manner, but by how it proceeds.
- By what is regarded as ‘adequate’ teaching and research in the various fields, or ‘adequate’ course content.
- For example: that expertise in no field of knowledge requires knowledge of God.



# The Three Stories About Our World

- The Theistic Story: everything derives from a personal God who is ultimate
- The Nirvana Story: everything derives from a reality that is undifferentiated – the realm of “no thing.” ‘New Age.’
- The Materialist Story: the physical universe itself is the only ultimate reality.

# Agnosticism

- “I don’t know” is the default position from The Three Stories.
- It looks innocent, but it really isn’t because it doesn’t just mean “I don’t know,” it means *we can’t know!*
- And to defend “we can’t know,” is as tough a job as defending one of The Three Stories.

# The Historical Power Of Jesus

- Arguably the most influential person in human history—who else?
- Book: “What If Jesus Had Never Been Born?” (Kennedy)
- Current influence on people in other religions. (Nov. '02 issue of Touchstone magazine)

# Why So Influential?

- Because of His answers to the four great questions of life.
- Especially:
  - His vision of reality, and
  - His teaching about how we can become the persons we ought to be.

# Jesus On Reality

- Reality is God and his kingdom.
- The ‘Kingdom’ of God is the range of His effective will.
- It is where what God wants done is done.
- As your ‘kingdom’ is the range of your effective will.

# The Trouble With My Kingdom Or Yours

- It cannot run on its own.
- Kingdoms in conflict.
- The impossibility of being who we ought to be by our own efforts and devices.
- We must have grace, from others, from God.
- Only life in His kingdom harmonizes human beings.

# What Is Morality?

A shared (public) understanding,  
with associated emotional postures,  
concerning which types of persons are to be  
(or are not to be) admired, approved  
imitated, encouraged and supported,  
without regard to whether they prosper or  
are able to accomplish what they desire.

# The Good Person: A Matter of the Heart

The morally good person is a person who is intent upon advancing the various goods of human life with which they are effectively in contact, in a manner that respects their relative degree of importance and the extent to which the actions of the person in question can actually promote the existence and maintenance of those goods.



# How To Live It

- By serious inquiry and personal testing.
- That will require honest comparison of Jesus and his teaching with others.
- And surrender of ‘what I want’ as ultimate point of reference
- If there really is a better way, Jesus would be the first to tell you to take it.

# Truth Will Not Set You Free!!!

- One of the most misquoted lines in human history.
- The statement is: “If you continue in my word <put it into practice> then you really are my apprentices; And then you will know the truth and the truth will set you free.”  
(John 8:31)
- Free from inability not to do evil.