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Assignment 4
Education 304 C

Is Dewey Christian

In reading John Dewey, an interesting question arises. Are the ideas of Dewey compatible with Christian ideas? Dewey places a high value on experience as moral training. Put another way, morality is learned from experience.

The Christian is more inclined to agree with Plato: that morality is within us and we must discover it. In fact I have more than once heard a Sunday School teacher tell me that my conscious was given to me by God so that I would be able to tell right and wrong without having to learn it. However, is Plato's interpretation the only one that a Christian can believe, or can a Christian be a Deweyian as well?

To me, Dewey almost makes more sense. Based on my own experience, I would argue guilt (or conscious), is aroused by violating what I was taught to believe is wrong, instead of what is actually wrong. For instance, I used to feel very guilty when I used certain four letter words. However, I have since decided that a word is just a word, and to use it as an expletive is doing no-one harm. Since I made that decision, I no longer feel the slightest guilt about it. Since I am more inclined to agree with Dewey, I will look for ways to justify him biblically.

To the best of my knowledge (and I will admit I could easily be missing something), the Bible contains no passage which overtly point to the existence of an internal conscious. (Perhaps this was incorporated into traditional Christianity because of Plato). In fact, why would God give us a Bible if we had an internal moral compass? This does not preclude God occasionally intervening, but it does not necessitate it either.