

# MORAL CHOICES: Considering the Alternatives

## A2TQ2\_ CHRISTIAN ETHICS Part One

### I. REVIEW OF THE INTRODUCTION

- **THE REASON FOR THIS COURSE:** is to equip believers<sup>1</sup> with some basic tools of moral reasoning so that both in our personal lives, disciple making and our evangelism, we can more wisely and confidently navigate the shoals of the cultural landscape.
- **THE IMPACT OF WORLDVIEWS ON THE TOPIC OF ETHICS:** can't be overstated for there's always a perspective from which people try to make sense out of life. Worldviews are like glasses through which people view reality.
- **THE MAJOR ELEMENTS OF A WORLDVIEW:** first consider the *God* question which is the most important aspect of a worldview because it dictates to us what is *ultimate* to us; second there's the nature of *Ultimate Reality* which involves metaphysical beliefs (i.e., the nature of a thing); third is the element of *Knowledge* which deals with epistemology (i.e., the study of how we know anything); fourth there's the aspect of *Ethics* which deals with the *ought-ness* of our conduct (i.e., our morals and thus the focus of our course); fifth is the *Humankind* question which deals with anthropological issues (i.e., what is mankind? Short-hand (Theology, Metaphysics, Epistemology, Ethics, & Anthropology)).
- **THE REASONS FOR WHY WE SHOULD STUDY ETHICS:** Because they give direction to people and societies; Because moral questions are at the heart of life's most important issues; Because we face moral choices every day; Because our society as a whole, is **bewildered** with the aforesaid issues and are absolutely lost as to resolving dilemmas that obtain; Because there's a sense that ethics are necessary for dealing with our increasingly technological society where we lack time to deliberate morally.

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<sup>1</sup> Nonbelievers can benefit from the contents to be covered, but this course has the Christian disciple in mind who too often is not taught the forthcoming material.

- **SOME KEY TERMS AND DISTINCTIONS IN ETHICS:** first *Morality* refers to the actual **content of** right and wrong; second *Ethics* refers to the **process of** determining what is right and wrong; third *Ethics* is both an art and a science.
  - **DESCRIPTIVE ETHICS: describes behavior**, it's a sociological discipline that attempts to describe the morals of other societies.
  - **NORMATIVE ETHICS: prescribes behavior**, it refers to the discipline that **produces moral norms** or rules as its end product.
  - **METAETHICS: explores the what, why and ought**, it investigates the meaning of moral language, or the epistemology of ethics, and also considers the justification of ethical theories and judgments (e.g., *right, wrong, just*).
  - **ARETAIC ETHICS** is a category that focuses on the virtues produced in the people.
  
- **MAJOR CATEGORIES IN ETHICS:**
  - **ACTION *Itself*** Focus of a moral judgment
  - **MOTIVE *itself*** Should be evaluated also known as "*the moral actor*"
  - **CONSEQUENCES of Actions and Decisions** Keep in mind that an action may be inherently right or wrong regardless of the consequences
  - **CHARACTER of the Moral Actor** This is the tendency of a person to act in predictable ways over time
  
- **ETHICAL SYSTEMS AND THEIR CATEGORIES:**
  - **DEONTOLOGICAL** the Greek term "deontos" means that which is binding, needful or right, it's our duty
  - **TELEOLOGICAL** are based on the end result produced by an action, which has no inherent right or wrong
  - **RELATIVISM** holds that right and wrong are not absolute and unchanging, but relative to one's culture or one's personal preferences (e.g., whatever is right for you is right for you...)

## QUESTIONS TO CONSIDER

1. Why should we be moral?
2. How would you distinguish between ethics and morality?
3. How are moral assessments made and what needs to be considered other than the action?

\*\*\*\*\*IN THE NEWS\*\*\*\*\*

DOES THE STATE REALLY KNOW BEST? Transgender issues and the stripping of a parent's rights, <https://www.lifesitenews.com/news/judge-strips-christian-parents-of-daughter-for-not-letting-her-transition-t>

HOW IMPORTANT IS IT TO EDUCATE CHILDREN IN WORLDVIEWS? The challenge of discipleship begins in the home. <https://www.str.org/blog/teaching-worldview-kids#.WpS0W4PwblU>

\*\*\*\*\*HOW WOULD YOU RESPOND\*\*\*\*\*

## II. WHAT ARE PEOPLE SAYING ABOUT THE ISSUE OF TRUTH?

Christian writer, lecturer and social scientist, Dr. Os Guinness on a talk he gave at Cambridge University, considers whether there is any truth and if so, how we can come to know it, and says:

*"...the most common motto in all the universities of the world is 'the truth shall set you free'. But while that adorns the walls, it no longer animates the minds of many people in the West. Truth is highly controversial."*<sup>2</sup>

*"The fact is the higher the education, the more brilliant the mind, often the slipperyer [sic] the rationalisations [sic]. In other words, humans are not only truth seekers we're also, let's be honest, truth twisters. And there's two*

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<sup>2</sup> Os Guinness lecture "Truth—How Can We be Sure about Anything" <http://www.bethinking.org/truth-tolerance/intermediate/truth-how-can-we-be-sure-about-anything.htm> (accessed 2/19/2014)

*ways you can always handle truth. We can try and make the truth conform to our desires of reality or make our desires conform to the truth of reality.*"<sup>3</sup>

When it comes to ethics, the issue of truth is core, for when truth is apprehended and lived out, it frees us to live and flourish according to our Creator's design. Consider what Jesus said in John 8:31-36:

*"If you continue in My word, then you are truly disciples of Mine; <sup>32</sup> and you will know the truth, and the truth will make you free." <sup>33</sup> They answered Him, "We are Abraham's descendants and have never yet been enslaved to anyone; how is it that You say, 'You will become free?'" <sup>34</sup> Jesus answered them, "Truly, truly, I say to you, everyone who commits sin is the slave of sin. <sup>35</sup> The slave does not remain in the house forever; the son does remain forever. <sup>36</sup> So if the Son makes you free, you will be free indeed."*

The context has Jesus' explaining to the Pharisees and those in the temple who he is, from where he comes, and where he is returning. After hearing him, many believed but many also doubted being blinded by their own sin. The key to freedom from bondage is the road of discipleship where Christ's word (The Truth) is the foundation from which we make sense out of reality. Because this world is designed it bears God's imprint, and thus in principle knowing the truth about anything has a liberating effect, including ethics and moral deliberation.

For starters then, we need to consider the "A, B, C's" of logic. I contend that logic is absolutely necessary for discovering truth and that includes our moral deliberation

#### **A. HOW IS LOGIC NECESSARY FOR DISCOVERING TRUTH?**

1. **LOGIC DEFINED.** Logic comes from the Greek, *logike*, or *logikos*, and pertains to that which belongs to intelligent speech or to a well-functioning reason, it is ordered, systematized, and intelligible.

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<sup>3</sup> Ibid. (accessed 2/19/2014)

- a. It's ***the study of the rules of exact reasoning***, of the forms of sound or valid thought patterns.
- b. It's ***the study and the application of the rules of inference to arguments or to systems of thought***.<sup>4</sup>

**2. WHAT IS THE NATURE OF LOGIC AND WHY IS IT NECESSARY?** For our purposes, we will quickly look at the four primary laws of logic. These laws are very important because they will help us better see *the nature and necessity of logic*.

**a. *The Law of (non-) Contradiction***: is the first of the primary principles of logic. It states "**A is not non-A.**" In other words, no statement, proposition, assertion, etc. can be both true and false at the **same time and in the same sense**.

- i. This is important because its usage **safeguards** the hearer from believing **a falsehood**. There are worldviews that deny the law of non-contradiction
  - 1. Many Buddhists, Hindus, and New Agers hold to the belief called *monism*—where God is all, and all is God.
  - 2. Here, all distinctions are **illusory**, *that is*, they are not real.
  - 3. But in order for *monism to refute* these laws, they **must use** them. They must make the **distinction** that these laws of logic aren't real, but they **use what they are denying** and thus, when this occurs, they refute their own statement.
- ii. The reason for this is that it is **a first principle of thought** or *epistemology* (i.e., the study of how we know what we know). Remember, **whenever this law is violated, there is a falsehood**.

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<sup>4</sup> Angeles, Peter A., *The Harper Collins Dictionary of Philosophy*, 2<sup>nd</sup> edition, p.170, © 1992 by Peter A. Angeles

- iii. **Example from Scripture:** Jesus said in Matthew 12:30 “He who is not with Me is against Me; and he who does not gather with Me scatters.”
  - iv. **Example from geometry:** circles are not square, and squares are not circles, thus to hold that there’s a square-circle is contradictory
  - v. **Example from letters:** an “a” is not a “b”, and a “c” is not a “d”, strictly speaking
- b. **The Law of Excluded Middle:** is the second primary law of logic. It states that it’s either “**A or non-A.**” In other words, a proposition or statement is *either* true *or* false. It must be one or the other, it can’t be both.
- i. **It’s importance?** This law is important because it helps us understand whether something is in fact taking place or not.
  - ii. **Example:** Say I tell my wife Trish “It is raining outside” and it actually is raining outside, then it is true that it is raining outside, and the opposite is false (i.e., that it is not raining outside).
  - iii. **Example from Scripture:** Jesus said in Matthew 12:30 “He who is not with Me is against Me; and he who does not gather with Me scatters.”
  - iv. **Example from Commerce:** either we’ll close that sale or we won’t.
  - v. **Example from Sports:** either Argentina will win the world cup in soccer, or they won’t in 2018
- c. **The Law of Identity:** is the third primary law of logic. It states “**A is A,**” in other words, if any statement is true, then it is true.
- i. **It’s importance?** This law is important because, among other things, it helps us distinguish *who* or *what* for example, committed a certain crime, should be praised/punished.

- ii. **Movie Example?** Recall the movie “*Home Alone*” where Kevin, played by McCauley Caulken, steals a tooth brush from the drug store and a boy who chases him out points him out to a police officer with his ***index finger*** “Shop lifter.” Here Kevin is identical to the “Shop Lifter”
  - iii. Theologian and Apologist Craig Hawkins writes on the ***importance*** of this law: “...it’s the difference between *Sound Doctrine Versus the Cults/Occult: Christ is Christ (i.e., the Christ of the Bible: fully divine—God the Son, the second person of the Trinity—and fully human) and not non-Christ (e.g., the Christ of the Bible is not the “Christ[s]” of the cults and/or the occult)*”.<sup>5</sup>
- d. ***The Law of Logical or Rational Inference:*** is the fourth primary law of logic. It states “if A=B, and B=C, then A=C.”
- i. **It’s importance?** This is important epistemologically (i.e., the study of how we know what we know) for it helps us get at all discursive or non-axiomatic knowledge.
  - ii. **Example:** “If Trish is ***my wife***, and ***my wife*** is the **mother of Alexandra**, then the ***mother of Alexandra*** is Trish”
3. **HOW IS LOGIC INDISPENSABLE?** These laws are part of the furniture of the universe which one cannot help but use. To deny them, is to ***use*** them.
- a. First, the primary principles/laws of logic/reason are first principles of epistemology.***<sup>6</sup>
- i. First principles are, “Statements that are self-evident and/or fundamental to the explanation of a system and upon which the system depends for consistency and coherence.”
  - ii. These principles are axiomatic (i.e., self-evident propositions)

<sup>5</sup> Article by Craig Hawkins: <http://thecollegeoftheology.com/god-and-logic/>. This article on *God and Logic* is worthy to be read for its comprehensiveness, depth and brevity on the subject (accessed 2/18/2014)

<sup>6</sup> This section is taken from, *Primer Chart on Logical Fallacies*, by Sergio Tangari 2003, from Craig Hawkins class “Logic” taken at Biola University, Fall Semester of 2002. The sources used for chart: Angeles, Peter A., *The Harper Collins Dictionary of Philosophy, 2<sup>nd</sup> edition*, (1992 by Peter A. Angeles); Geisler & Brooks, *Come Let Us Reason: An Introduction to Logical Thinking*, (1990 by Baker Books); and Hurley, Patrick J., *A Concise Introduction to Logic*, (7<sup>th</sup> Edition, 2000 by Wadsworth).

iii. Which cannot not be used, there's no "getting around them"

***b. Second, distinctions between true and false or what is applicable and not applicable is meaningful only if logic is true and applicable.***

- i. If there were no law of contradiction, the concept of true or false could not obtain.
- ii. That is, no topic could obtain a true/false application, for we could not call something false, without first assuming that there is a state of affairs that is true (non-contradiction).
- iii. In other words, the law of (non-) contradiction states that "A is not non-A," in other words, no statement, proposition, assertion, etc. can be both true and false at the same time and in the same sense. This law **draws the lines** between what is false and true.

***c. Third, a statement's meaningfulness or significance or truthfulness depends on logic.***

- i. For example, if logic is not true, nor can it be applied to the topic we are covering, it then follows that the statement is meaningless. The fact however is that a statement has meaning specifically because logic is true and applicable.
- ii. In other words, logic must obtain if statements or significance has meaning.

***d. Fourth, to deny or try to disprove the need, necessity, and truth of logic a person must use it.***

- i. By saying, "logic is not true", they affirm it is true, namely that it is the true state of affairs that logic is not true.
- ii. By doing this they disprove their original assertion "logic is not true"
- iii. In other words, if one uses logic in order to refute it, it is self-evidently not true, for they use it in order to deny it. Example: "No puedo escribir ni una palabra en Español/ I cannot write not even one word in Spanish," is obviously false, for I just did.

***e. Fifth, one cannot not use logic in the real world.***

- i.* Life without logic is like jumping in the water without getting wet. It cannot, not be the case.
- ii.* Example: “Let’s go to the beach” does not make sense if logic is not true. Which beach do we go to? Manhattan, Newport, Torrance, Zuma, etc. If logic were not true, we couldn’t even begin going to say Manhattan Beach, for there is no *distinction* to make.
- iii.* If logic is not true, how is it that your creditors call *your* phone and *not* your neighbors? Logic is part of the furniture of the universe, that is why you get the call, and your neighbor does not.



### **QUESTIONS TO CONSIDER**

- 1. Why should we care about truth when considering moral thought?**
- 2. What are the four laws of Logic and How can they be applied in moral discourse?**
- 3. Name three ways in which is logic indispensable?**

