



Outline

Lesson 2 - Philosophy & Ethics: Says Who?

- I. Introduction – Have you been taken captive? - 2 Timothy 2:24-26
 - A. Scriptural warning against hollow and deceptive philosophy – Colossians 2:8
 - B. Carl Sagan’s Worldview – “The Cosmos is all there is, or ever was, or will be”
 - C. Assumptive language – A powerful and dangerous form of knowledge
 - D. Cosmic Cube – Illustrates the naturalistic worldview belief that there is nothing outside the cosmos; reality is a closed box and all truth must be materially perceived
 - E. Biblical presuppositions – God is and He has revealed himself to us (general revelation through our world and specific revelation through His word)
 - F. God’s Nature - Transcendent and immanent – He is above and works within the box
- II. Philosophy – What is it?
 - A. Webster 1828 definition vs Current definition – God has been removed from the discipline of philosophy in today’s culture
 - B. Philosophical Questions – What is existence? What is the meaning and purpose of life?
 - C. Universal and Particulars – Aristotle and Plato’s philosophical dilemma – How do we arrive at Truth? How do we make sense of the unity and diversity of our world?
- III. Postmodernism – Can you live it?
 - A. What is Right? What is wrong? - Ethical implications of postmodernism – There is no basis for ethical standards or ethical language in a naturalistic worldview
 - B. Plato’s Question – “Is an act right because God said it, or did God know it was right and told us about it?” – His laws are an expression of His nature

- C. Naturalistic philosophy implications – Darwin’s views in non-assumptive language
 - D. Statistical Ethics – Our culture determines ethics through normalcy and survey data
- IV. Worldview – Formal worldview vs personal worldview
- A. Lack of a personal, biblical worldview in America – We fail to see Christianity as a worldview that governs every area of life
 - B. Our worldview drives how we think, act, and feel – What we *really* believe
 - C. Consequences of a non-biblical worldview: We buy the lies and conform to the world
- V. Conclusion and Solution – Renewing of the Mind – Metamorphoo – Romans 12:2
“Do not conform any longer to the pattern of this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind.”



Lesson Guide

Lesson 2 - Philosophy and Ethics: Says Who?

Introduction

In this second installment of our worldview tour, Dr. Tackett takes students into the northeast quadrant of the compass for an introduction to Philosophy and Ethics, the two outside pillars of our Temple of Truth or framework of foundational concepts. In essence, the message of this lesson parallels the precept of Proverbs 23:7 – “As a man thinks in his heart, so is he.” The heart of the discussion lies in the thought that there is a formal and vital connection between our ideas about the nature of the world (philosophy) and our understanding of right and wrong behavior (ethics).

Themes

Philosophy, according to Dr. R. C. Sproul, is “a scientific quest to discover ultimate reality.” This would seem to indicate that philosophical ideas about truth are closely aligned with the biblical definition given in Lesson 1: truth = *reality*. In this connection, it’s worth noting that the 1828 edition of Webster’s Dictionary included the following affirmation: “true religion and true philosophy must ultimately arrive at the same principle.” Significantly, Webster’s original definition of the word also asserted that philosophy aims “to enlarge our understanding of God.” God, of course, has been edited out of subsequent editions of the dictionary. This is consistent with the perspective of contemporary culture, which has been taken captive by the unfounded *assumption* that “the cosmos is all there is or ever was or ever will be” (Carl Sagan). Another way to say this is that current thought pictures reality as a closed box – a *cosmic cube* – in which there is no room for anything that cannot be sensually or materially perceived. The problem is that with the lid of the box closed and God excluded, philosophy is deprived of a universal reference point and thus crippled in its “scientific quest for ultimate reality.” As a result, it cannot answer the most basic questions about *right* and *wrong* behavior.

Points to Watch For

Dr. Tackett persuasively argues that even the most outspoken adherents of “cosmic cube” thinking and relativistic ethics – thinkers like Carl Sagan and William Provine – cannot possibly *live* by their own reductionist and materialistic principles. On the other side of the coin, he suggests that many contemporary Christians have been unwittingly taken captive by the assumptions of our age (“conformed to this world”). He concludes the lesson by challenging students to *think* more aggressively about what it means to be “transformed by the renewing of the mind” (Romans 12:2).

Discussion Questions

- 1) What did you see on this tour?
- 2) Why are so many people – even those who argue adamantly for the “cosmic cube” perspective – so obviously uncomfortable with life “inside the box”? How do they attempt to deal with this difficulty?
- 3) What do we mean by *universals* and *particulars*? How are they related? What bearing do they have on our quest for answers to the “Big Questions” of life?
- 4) Dr. Tackett asserts, “You won’t find the answers to the Big Questions inside the box.” Why not?
- 5) What, according to Dr. R. C. Sproul, is the distinction between *morality* and *ethics*? How has confusion on this point precipitated a *crisis in ethics* in the modern world?
- 6) How does the biblical worldview stand opposed to the “cosmic cube” worldview?
- 7) Is it possible for a Christian to be deceived and “taken captive” by the empty philosophies of the world? If you *have* been deceived, how do you know? How?



Key Terms

Lesson 2 – Philosophy and Ethics: Says Who?

Assumptive Language: Powerful and deceptive use of words in which a seemingly simple statement is made, hoping the hearer will buy the simple statement without recognizing the huge assumptions that come with it. When one buys the simple statement, you buy its assumptions without knowing it.

Biblical worldview: A formal worldview based ultimately upon that nature, character, and being of God as it is expressed in His infallible Word and His creation. It becomes the foundation for a life system that governs every area of existence.

Capricious: Impulsive, unpredictable, characterized or subject to whim. Not guided by steady judgment, intent or purpose.

Carl Sagan (1934-96): An American astronomer and proponent of scientific naturalism who promoted the Search for Extra-Terrestrial Intelligence (SETI). *Cosmos* was the most watched television show on PBS of all time (more than 600 million people have seen it since it first aired in 1980), and his novel *Contact* was made into a film of the same name in 1997 starring Jodie Foster.

Cosmic Cube: The philosophy that has consciously or subconsciously captured our culture which says the material world is all that is, was, or ever will be; nothing exists outside of the box. This philosophical position has severely damaging implications.

Epistemology: the branch of philosophy that studies the nature of knowledge, its foundations, its presuppositions, and its extent and validity. How we know what we know.

Ethics: The standard, the line, that which ought to be. The principles of conduct governing a person or group of people.

Formal worldview: A comprehensive set of truth claims that purports to paint a picture of reality.

Fundamental biblical presuppositions: God is and He has revealed Himself to us through His creation (general revelation) and through His Word (special revelation).

Hollow and deceptive philosophy: Philosophies that are based on human traditions and worldly principles that set themselves up against God's truth claims. See Colossians 2:8.

Immanent: Present in and involved in the created universe. God is at work, actively involved with His creation, but separate from it (see "Transcendent").

Metamorphoo: Greek for "transformation." Root of the word "metamorphosis." This is the primary goal of The Truth Project: for individuals to be transformed into the likeness of Christ by gazing on the face of God. This process is not easy and we often struggle with God's Truth claims in the "cocoon." Metamorphoo is used in Romans 12:2, where it is usually translated as "transformed."

Metaphysics: the branch of philosophy that examines the nature of reality, existence, and the relationship between mind and matter, time and space, fact and value.

Morality: The rightness or wrongness of conduct; that which is. Habits of life or the practices of an individual or culture.

Naturalism: Truth and reality are derived from nature and natural causes. Rejects all spiritual and supernatural explanations of the world and holds that science is the primary basis of what can be known.

Particulars: Individual truth claims; the small details that describe "particular" objects.

Personal worldview: The set of individual truth claims that you have embraced so deeply that you believe they reflect what is really real and therefore they drive what you think, how you act, and what you feel.

Philosophy: The love of wisdom. The systematic examination of basic concepts such as truth, existence, reality, freedom, etc. Webster's 1828 dictionary definition: "The objects of philosophy are to ascertain facts or truth, and the causes of things or their phenomena; to enlarge our views of God and his works..." True religion and true philosophy must ultimately arrive at the same principle.

Postmodernism: cluster of philosophies with the underlying assumption that no one worldview or belief system (metanarrative) can claim to be the truth, which often results in relativistic thinking and the use of language as a power play.

Pragmatic: more concerned with practical results than with principles or truth.

Primary doctrine: Theology and Anthropology. Who is God and who is man? These are the two basic foundations for a person's and a culture's worldview.

Spiritual Naturalism: Truth and reality are derived from nature and natural causes. Accepts a spiritual dimension to this world, but adds spirit inside the Cosmic Cube and, as a result, rejects a transcendent creator.

Transcendent: Existing outside, above and independent, of the material universe. God is transcendent, but also immanent (see "Immanent").

Universals: Broad "universal" truth claims that provide meaning to the smaller "particular" questions in life. "Universals" provide answers to the great philosophical questions we face.

Utilitarian: relating to or advocating the doctrine that value is measured in terms of usefulness, concerned with practicality.

William Provine: A professor of evolutionary biology at Cornell University who is an atheist and adamant opponent of intelligent design.