

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 & 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).

The Truth Project – Lesson 2 Philosophy and Ethics

2Tim 2:24 – 26 “...in the hope that God will grant them repentance leading them to a knowledge of the truth, and that they will come to their senses and escape from the trap of the devil, who has taken them captive to do his will.”

Link: repentance and truth. Also how we should approach “outsiders”. This passage is speaking about those outside of the body of believers

Col 2:8 - Speaking to us as believers...

¶ See to it that no one takes you captive through philosophy and empty deception, according to the tradition of men, according to the elementary principles of the world, rather than according to Christ.

- A warning to believers
- Implication: believers can be taken captive. By what? By lies

If this is a warning we need to understand the deceptive philosophy or we will be taken captive.

An example of deceptive philosophy: From the “Cosmos” series.

Introduction: “The cosmos is all that is, or ever was, or ever will be. Our contemplations of the cosmos stir us. There is this tingling in the spine, that catch in the voice...a faint sensation as if a distant memory of a fall from a great height. We know we are approaching the grandest of mysteries”

Cosmos: Assumptions – Carl Sagan, 1981 Humanist of the Year

“ The Cosmos is all that is, or ever was, or ever will be.”

- Fundamentally he is saying there is no God.
- If Sagan had come out and said “There is no God” the series would not have been accepted.

“The contemplations of the Cosmos stir us” Why?

“There is...a faint sensation as if a distant memory...of falling from a great height...”

- What Sagan is implying is that we are not the product of divine design.
- We are a product of the cosmos – “the stuff in the box”

This is an example of a form of knowledge we are bombarded with - Assumptive language

Taken Captive

The power and danger of assumptive language

Assumptions are the most dangerous form of knowledge

Why?

Assumptions are caught and bought without an open, conscious dialog

- You can buy it without even knowing it..
- If you buy the statement you buy the underlying assumption as well

If you do not have the discernment to understand what Sagan is saying (there is no God) in the opening lines of the series you could find yourself buying that lie.

Sagan/Cosmos Series clip # 2

“Some part of our being knows this is where we came from. We long to return...and we can because the cosmos is also within us. We are made of “star stuff”...we are the way for the cosmos to know its self...”

The cosmos is all there is leads to the Cosmic Cube – a philosophy that has captured our culture everywhere.

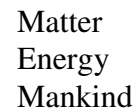
The largeness of the cube somehow allows us to begin believe that is big enough to actually say that that's all that there is. There is nothing outside of that "cube".

A philosophy attempting to define everything

Nothing outside of the box - everything that exists is inside of that box.
Matter, energy, mankind

Implications for who we are, the meaning of life, etc.
How did we get here?

Nothing



Matter
Energy
Mankind

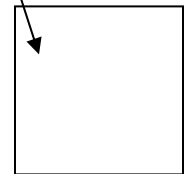
Biblical Philosophy: God has designed/created the box and its contents and is active within the box..

Deists – God created the box but does not operate within the box. – an irrelevant god.

Biblical World View –

1. Built upon the presupposition that God is. – That He exists
2. That He has revealed Himself to us.
 - a. In His creation itself – the heavens declare the glory of God
 - b. His special revelation – His Word

God



How often do we live as if He was not there? Not a matter of what we believe but how we live.

When man begins to reject God – humankind does not want to live in a sterile box like that.. A "pantheist" would add god within the first box – not return to the transcendent God.

What is philosophy – to discover ultimate reality... or truth?

R.C.Sproul: Philo + Sophia = the love of wisdom. "It is a scientific quest actually to discover ultimate reality"

Webster – 1828 "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..."

Webster added the following quote from SS Smith – Philosophy: "True religion and true philosophy must ultimately arrive at the same principle." This makes sense. If philosophy is seeking ultimate reality, and truth is reality, they ought to come together.

Something has changed?

Webster's 3rd New International Dictionary – Philosophy: "...a search for the underlying causes and principles of reality." It just leaves God out of the picture.

When God is left out of the picture, all you have left is the box. Now you are searching for reality in the box.

Philosophical Questions:

What is existence? What is reality?

What does it mean to exist? How do I know I exist?

 If I do exist, why do I exist?

 If I think I exist, where did that thought come from?

What is thinking, reason, logic?

What is knowing?

 If I know something, how can I know that it is real?

What is the meaning and purpose of life?

- An impossible task: trying to find the answers to these questions limited to what is in the box.
Quest of philosophers has been to determine the answers to these questions – called the Universals
When you begin to understand the “universals” the particulars begin to fall into place

Philosophers believed they could develop the universals by looking at all the particulars (develop the whole by learning the parts).

Painting: The School of Athens – by Raphael

 Plato – Need to begin with upper level Ideas

 Aristotle – Need to begin with the Particulars

 Plato is pointing upward...Aristotle is pointing downward

- The secular philosophical dilemma: where do you begin to find these universal truths? Both were looking inside the box.

Naturalism's philosophical problem

UNIVERSALS (give meaning to the particulars)

Gap

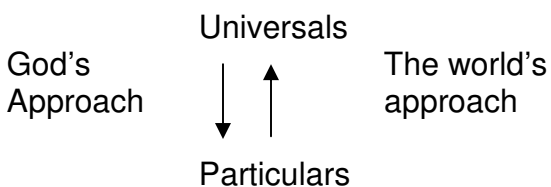
PARTICULARS (including each of us as a person)

How does one find the Universals?

Leonardo Da Vinci – Thought he could find the universals using math, then tried science, then art, but could not find the universal truths.

Starting from the premise of God...

God has given us the Universals



When you leave God out of the equation

Hollow & Deceptive Philosophy

Materialism: Matter is the only reality

Idealism: ideas are the only reality

Empiricism: knowledge comes from experience

Rationalism: knowledge is gained by reason without experience

Naturalism: true knowledge only comes from scientific study

Determinism: there is really no knowledge, you only react to stimuli

Relativism: there are no absolutes

Mentalism: Mind is the true reality and objects exist only as an aspect of man's awareness

Mechanism: everything can be explained in terms of physical or biological causes

Selipism: self is all you need to know

Subjectivism: knowledge is dependent upon and limited by your own subjective experiences

Intuitionism: knowledge comes primarily from some kind of inner sense

Hedonism: pleasure is good, pain is evil, if it feels good, it is

Etc.

- Hollow and deceptive – they shut themselves off from the source of the truths which they seek - God.

- Philosophy today will not take us to the answers we seek...only depression, despondency, and despair.

“You don't know nor can you be sure that the seat you are sitting on is really real”

Postmodernism: Can you Live it?

A philosophy that has captured our culture today.

Says in the end “there is no absolute truth”. Your truth and my truth may be totally opposite and yet they are both true. Then what is right and what is wrong?

Ravi Zacharias: Speaking at Ohio State University shown the Wexner Center of the Arts

“What is this building all about? There are staircases that go nowhere...there are pillars that serve no purpose? And the man driving me said this is the world's first postmodern building. And the architect said: if life itself has no purpose why should our buildings have any design or any purpose? So he built it at random without any purpose as it were. I said I have a question for you...he said what's that?. I said did he do that with the foundation as well?

Answer: No – he can't without design based upon purpose.

This is an example of where philosophy is taken us. When you shut yourself off from God that is what you are left with.

“The fool says in his heart there is no God” (Psalm 14:1)

Ethical Implications if you begin with a philosophy apart from God – nothing but the cosmic cube.

- you and I are natural cosmic accidents

- how do you determine what is right and wrong?

- how is right and wrong developed limited to natural causes (limited to what is inside the box)?

Answering the question “what is right and wrong?” becomes the fundamental problem associated with a culture that has turned away from God.

Ethics:

What is right?

What is wrong?

Who makes the rules?

In the box world view: might makes right – strength, popular vote, weapons

- Video sample of the world's answers...

We don't know how to answer this question without God.

Biblical world view: we go back to the ultimate source of truth – God

From Plato's Euthyphro

“Is an act right because God wills it, or whether God wills it because he knows it is right?”

William of Ockham

Whatever God wills must be done simply because he says so. If God had wanted, He could have ordered men to obey the opposite of the Ten Commandments. Even now He can rescind those laws and will their opposite.

Ockham's statement implies God can change.

Why is lying wrong? Because God can't lie. It is not a practical issue – it is counter to the very nature of God. The Ten Commandments are not just a set of rules for us - God is expressing His very nature.

Debate Clip: Dr William Provine

Summary of Implications of Modern Evolutionary Biology (Naturalistic Philosophy)

- No gods or purposive forces
- No life after death
- No ultimate foundation for ethics
- No ultimate meaning in life
- No free will

There is no ultimate meaning in life...only “proximate” meaning

There is no reason ethics can't be robust with no ultimate foundations for ethics

Cube View: no ultimate foundation for ethics.

R. C. Sproul – a linguistics shift has occurred.

What was: Morality – looks at the word “is”, Ethics – looks at the word “ought”

That distinction has been obscured today. Now morality and ethics are viewed and used as synonyms – statistical morality – how we determine what is right and wrong today.

“Good” is determined by what is rather than what ought to be.

Why the obsession with surveys today? – It's the only way to determine right from wrong

Taken Captive

Barna Study: How many Americans have a Biblical Worldview?

General American population: 4%

“Born-again” American Population: 9%

...and we don't act that different from the world...

Charles Colson: “The church's singular failure in recent decades has been the failure to see Christianity as a life system, or worldview, that governs every area of existence”

What is your worldview?

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

It is not that you know what the formal worldviews are but what is your personal world view?

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.

That is what Jesus is getting at when He was talking about worry and fear. Our worldview seldom matches a formal worldview perfectly. Our worldview contains things we have bought or adopted along the way.

What are the consequences? Buy the lies...Conform to the world...

The Solution

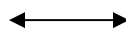
Romans 12:2 Do not conform any longer to the pattern of this world but be transformed by the renewing of your mind.

A new mind brings us a new heart. We can't have a new heart by bypassing the mind.

R.C. Sproul: "We're probably living in the most anti-intellectual period in the history of the Church. Not anti-scientific, not anti-academic, but anti-intellect, anti-mind. The Bible tells us that we are called as Christian people not to be conformed to this world but be transformed...and the way of that transformation is through the renewing of the mind. We have been made by our Creator to have a direct line from the brain, or the mind, to the heart...and so for the Scripture the new mind brings with it always a new heart. But you can't bypass the mind in an attempt to have a renewed heart. And that is what people are trying to do today. 'I don't want to learn...I don't want to study the Word of God. I want to have a feeling, I want to have some mystical experience. And let that supplant or replace the hard studies of the content of the Word of God'. But the way the Scriptures say life changes is when the mind changes".

There is a connection:

Jesus stating "for this reason I was born,
And for this I came to testify to the truth



Not to be conformed to the
world but be transformed

Transformed: Greek Metamorphoo
From which we get the word metamorphosis

Used three times in Scripture:

Romans 12:2

Mark 9:2 – The transfiguration of Christ

2 Corinthians 3:18 – referring to our transformation

Modern day example is the conversion of a larva in a cocoon to a butterfly.
The butterfly (the result) is the pretty part – the cocoon is the struggle.

Truth claims of God – Do you live like they are really real?

If we do not believe the truth claims of God and act in accordance with them...where will the "light" be?

The captivity will continue – the cries, the weeping will continue both within the Body and without.

Key Terms Lesson 2

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.

Additional Information

Spiritual Naturalism

This concept deserves a little more attention than what we gave it in the DVD especially because of the increased attention to "spiritualism" in our culture.

Naturalism, of course, is easy to define because its adherents maintain that all of reality exists within the natural realm. This is the essence of Sagan's statement "The cosmos is all that is, ever was, or ever will be". In a classic sense, naturalism has assumed that all of reality is made up of only things "physical": matter and energy. This gives rise to the notion that man is a material beast and a material beast only. There is no spiritual essence to man. Additionally, the honest naturalist has to deal with the logical conclusion that the thoughts of man must come solely from the physical firings within the synapse of brain tissue, leaving man without a "soul" or "spirit" and giving rise to the notion of behaviorism and Dr. William Provine's statement that man has no free will.

This position, however, leaves man in a difficult position. He inherently knows that he does have a free will because he can choose whether or not he is going to put on the red shirt or the blue shirt, whether or not he ties his left shoe first or right shoe first. He can even fold his arms or snap his fingers, once, twice, or even three times if he chooses. So, pure naturalism leaves man cold. He also has this innate sense that there is something about him that goes beyond the physical. He may not call it a "soul" because he may not be able to define the soul. But he knows that he is more than physical.

Secondly, we do not like a cold universe. We want something beyond the physical. When man rejects the true God, he generally will replace Him with something tangible, but will imbue that physical thing with spiritual characteristics. Here is where we get sun-gods and moon-gods, Nile gods and Baals. In our day, we get witches and ghosts, pantheism, The Force be with you, and all sorts of spirit-filled elements. Our movies and TV shows are filled with spirit-filled elements. It creeps under the door, it invades your body, it rises from the pond or it possesses the little girl next door. Many religions end up with a physical god, no matter how big or powerful.

So, we have simply added a third element to the box: spirit. You may find it interesting to know that Carl Sagan's was a pantheist. He believed that the cosmos was all that there was, but he believed that it was a spirit-filled universe.

We shouldn't be fooled by all of this. It is not a movement that we should embrace simply because people are "spiritual". Satan and the demons are spiritual. Much of the evil that we deal with is "spiritual". What is missing in all of this is the clear acknowledgement and acquiescence to the transcendent creator God who has revealed Himself to us through His creation and His Word. That kind of a God is unacceptable to spiritual naturalists though, because that kind of a God represents a holiness that restricts their drive to do what they want to do.

Psalm 2

¹ Why do the nations conspire and the peoples plot in vain? ² The kings of the earth take their stand and the rulers gather together against the LORD and against his Anointed One. ³ "Let us break their chains," they say, "and throw off their fetters."