

ET 2.1 – INTRODUCTION TO CHRISTIAN ETHICS

Thinking about ethics

- A. Further Reading
- B. Thoughts / exercises
- C. The Meta Model
- D. Three lists / classifications of fallacies

A. FURTHER READING

- Harry Blamires, *The Post-Christian Mind*, 1999
- Randy Booth, *Always Ready*, P&R 1996
- G Boak & David Thompson - *Mental Models for Managers: Frameworks for Practical Thinking*, 1998
- D A Carson - *Exegetical Fallacies*, 1996
- Robert Cialdini - *Influence: Science and Practice*, 1988
- Gordon H Clark - *Logic*, 1985
- Edward De Bono - *Teach your child how to think*, 1992
- Harold Evans - *Essential English for Journalists*, 2000
- Antony Flew – *How to think straight*, 1998
- H W Fowler and F G Fowler - *The King's English*, numerous editions
- Norman Geisler and Ronald Brooks - *Come let us reason - an introduction to logical reasoning*, 1990
- Os Guinness - *Fit Bodies, Fat Minds*, 1994
- Howard Kahane and Nancy Cavender - *Logic and Contemporary Rhetoric*, 1998
- Madsen Pirie – *How to Win Every Argument*, 2006
- Anne Thomson - *Critical Thinking in Ethics*, 1999
- Robert Thouless - *Straight and Crooked Thinking*, 1930/1974
- Lewish Vaughn – *The Power of Critical Thinking*, OUP, 2005
- Douglas N Walton - *Informal Logic*, 1989
- Anthony Weston - *A Rulebook for Arguments* (second ed), 1992

Any number of books on creative thinking, critical thinking, conflict resolution, negotiation, formal logic, informal logic, how to study, how to think, debating, compliance psychology etc - go to Amazon, Ottakers, Waterstones and see. Search for any of these online and go explore ...

Or just type “critical thinking” in the search engine.

See also the following sites (checked 19th Feb 2007) and further links they give:

http://www.summit.org/resource/essay/show_printable_essay.php?essay_id=44

- Critical Thinking

<http://www.goodart.org/fallazoo.htm> - Fallacy Zoo

http://www.mnforsustain.org/student_logical_fallacies_with_references.htm#Fallacies%20of%20Distraction - Stephen Downe - excellent

<http://www.bethinking.org/> - UCCF apologetics

<http://www.skepdic.com/> - Sceptic's Dictionary - anti-Christian

<http://www.sjsu.edu/depts/itl/> - A course in critical thinking

B. THOUGHTS / EXERCISES

1. Intro:

Doing ethics properly we know:

Fit in God's story

Fit with rest doctrine

See all perspectives, recognize right distinctions

Sufficiency Scripture – got to read properly

Situation – understand accurately

Non-Christian frameworks

Christian approaches

In order to evaluate alternatives / see weaknesses in own position we must

- think clearly

- understand and be understood

- argue / respond cogently

We want to take every thought captive to obedience of Christ – inconsistent / unwarranted / incoherent. And we want to make plain statement of truth, commend to everyone’s conscience – therefore not want to present ambiguously, unclearly, unconvincingly, deceptively.

2. Listening

- a) Choose one of the following propositions on which you disagree:
- Boxing should be against the law
 - Memory healing is an important pastoral ministry
 - Smoking cannabis should be legalised
 - Giving a bribe is not wrong
 - Those guilty of bestiality should be executed
 - Harry Potter novels are bad for your spiritual health
- b) A speaks for 2 minutes uninterrupted. B listens in order to then re-present A’s arguments back to him/her as faithfully and sympathetically as possible - in 1 minute.
- c) Reverse roles.
- d) Explain to each other what it was like.

3. First, second and third positions. The other’s shoes. Watch. Listen. Assess. Basic rules of rapport – rep systems, predicates, matching, mirroring.
4. Remember WHY you are ‘arguing’ - to hurt, impress, persuade, gain, produce action, impart information, learn, explore ?
5. Courtesy and attention, patience and respect. Self-awareness, body language.
6. Emotions - tone and vocabulary;
7. Charitable interpretation.

Charles Williams: *The Descent of the Dove*

“Not one mind in a thousand can be trusted to state accurately what its opponent says, much less what he thinks.” (p.112)

“The history of Christendom itself would have been far happier could we all have remembered that rule of intelligence - not to believe a thing more strongly at the end of a bitter argument than at the beginning, not to believe it with the energy of the opposition rather than with one’s own.” (p.193)

8. Edward De Bono - rules for thinking - *Teach your child how to think*, pp. 220-23. (Not from the Bible ...)
1. Always be constructive (even demolition work is constructive – Jer, II Cor)
 2. Think slowly and try to make things as simple as possible
 3. Detach your ego from your thinking and be able to stand back to look at your thinking
 4. Be clear about what you are trying to do - the focus and purpose of your thinking
 5. Be able to switch gears - logic, creativity, information seeking
 6. Summarize what conclusions you have reached - where have you come
 7. Feelings and emotions are important but in their place
 8. Always look for new perceptions, ideas, alternatives
 9. Move to and fro between detail and broad-level. Chunking up and down.
 10. Analyse premises and information. Is the conclusion 'may be' or 'must be' ?
 11. Differing views come from differing perceptions more often than differing logic
 12. All actions have consequences and an impact on people and their values.

9. Argument:

Structure of an argument - conclusion with reasons

KC/T 3

KC/T 13 – rubric re moral argument

Recognising arguments

KC/T 13 – 2, 3, 4

KC/T 14 – summary

KC/T 3 – 6, 7, 8 (1, 4 ?)

Analysing arguments

KC/T 15 – bit more detail

- identify the conclusion
- identify the supporting reasons (and unstated assumptions)
- be especially careful to identify analogies and examples
- and for comparisons, explanations, moral concepts, moral principles
- are the supporting reasons true ?
- do the supporting reasons require the conclusion ? (is the argument valid ?)

KC/T 16 – 8

KC/T 17 – summary bottom left

Evaluating arguments:

The Meta Model - precision in language – see below

Fallacies – see below

Criticising arguments

- power of questions
- power of counter-examples
- power of metaphors
- taking to logical conclusion
- power of one-liners: Selbourne exercise – see pp.11-12 below

More practice – KC/T 18 – 7, 9; 4 – 2, 4; 5 – 15, 19, 23; 7 – 13, 23; 8 – 1, 5; 9 – 21

10. Conflict resolution

Validating the other's position

Label suggestions / criticisms / questions

Chunk up and down

Reframe – e.g.s – horse, tap, maths

Hierarchy of values - where do you meet ?

Extended metaphors / analogies

Counter-examples as questions

11. De Bono tools:

a) Six-Thinking Hats:

- White: Facts, figures, info. What info do we have ? Need ?
- Red: Emotions, feelings, hunches and intuition. What do I feel about this ?
- Black: Caution, judgement, criticism. Will it work ? Does it fit the facts ? Can it be done ?
- Yellow: Advantages, benefits, savings. Why is it a good thing to do ?
- Green: Exploration, suggestions, new ideas, alternatives. What else could we do ?
- Blue: Summary, where are we up to, take a step back. What next ?

b) CAF - Consider All Factors

c) OPV - Other People's Values

d) PMI - Plus, Minus, Interesting

e) AGO - Aims, Goals, Objectives

f) Lateral thinking - po (outrageous, wishful thinking, literalism; random-word stimulation).

g) To/LoPoSo/Go - thinking through a problem

12. Find three op-eds / essays from *Times*, *Guardian*, *Telegraph*, *Independent*, *Economist* etc Or go online to opinion sites such as <http://www.spiked-online.com/>

- Identify the conclusions (noting that they are often subtle and often multiple).
- What does the writer want you to think about what subjects ?
- What does the writer want to change ?
- What reasons / supporting arguments does the writer use ?
- Is the use of language precise ?
- What assumptions, analogies, concepts and so on are used in the piece ?
- How strong is the argument ?
 - Try to argue against the validity of the premises
 - Try to demonstrate any failure of logic

C. THE META-MODEL

When we speak we generalize, distort, and delete. In order to be clear that we agree or disagree with someone we need to be sure that

- 1) they have said what they really mean and
- 2) we have heard what they really said.

(Simplistic model of comms ... and yet ...)

The Meta-Model, formulated by John Grinder and Richard Bandler in the late 70s may be of help here. It is usable in our efforts to help people in formal or informal 'counselling', to apply it to arguments we hear on the TV/radio, to test what we say to others by it, and to subject our own internal dialogue to its analysis.

A. DELETIONS

1. Unspecified Noun

Examples:

The child had an accident;
They are out to get me;
Pets are a nuisance;
It's a matter of opinion

Question:

Who or what specifically ?

2. Unspecified Verb

Examples:

She hurt herself;
He helped me;
I am trying to remember it;
I feel depressed

Question:

How specifically ?

3. Comparison

Examples:

It's too expensive;
New Daz is better;
I've too many things to do

Question:

Compared with what ?

4. Judgment

Examples:

I did that really badly;
Henry would be just right for the job;
That's a dangerous way of thinking

Questions:

Who says ?
How do you know ?
By what standard ?

5. Nominalization (abstract nouns that derive from verbs)

Examples:

I have a bad memory;
Discipline is an essential part of education;
I wish I had more freedom

Question:

Turn into verb and ask 'who/what -
is x ing whom/what, and how ?'

B. GENERALIZATIONS

6. Modal Operators of Possibility

Examples:

I can't change;
I can't witness;
It's impossible to read that fast;
Reformed churches can't grow

Question:

What would happen if you did ?
What stops you ?

7. Modal Operators of Necessity

Examples:

I have to get up at 4.00 a.m.;
You should not go to pubs

Question:

What would happen if you did/didn't

8. Universal Quantifier

Examples:

I never remember anything;
Houses are too expensive;
There are no suitable husbands left;
All generalizations are wrong

Question:

All ? Every ? Never ? None ?
Has there ever been a time when ...?

C. DISTORTIONS

9. Complex Equivalence

Examples:

You're not listening - you've got that
look on your face;
He's late again - he doesn't care about me.

Question:

How does x mean y ?
How do you know ?
Has x ever not meant y ?

10. Presupposition - what leads you to believe that ... state presupp

Examples:

Why can't you look after me properly ?;
You're as stupid as your brother;
You're not going to tell me another lie ?

Question:

What leads you to believe that
_____ (state presupposition)

11. Cause and Effect - how specifically does x cause y ?

Examples:

You make me feel bad;
The weather gets me down;
I would help you but I'm too tired

Question:

How exactly does x cause y ?

12. Mind Reading

Examples:

George is unhappy;
He's angry but he won't admit it;
I could tell she didn't like my present

Question:

How exactly do you know ?

The Precision Model - a simpler version:

- | | |
|---------------------------------------|--|
| 1. Unspecified noun: | who or what specifically ? |
| 2. Unspecified verb: | how specifically ? |
| 3. Too much, too many, too expensive: | compared to what ? |
| 4. Should, shouldn't, must, can't: | what would happen if you did / could ? |
| 5. All, every, never, none: | all ?, every ?, never ?, none ? |

D. THREE LISTS / CLASSIFICATIONS OF FALLACIES

AN UNSOURCED CATEGORIZATION OF FALLACIES

1. Fallacy of accident - from a general rule to a particular case

Men are capable of seeing, therefore blind men are capable of seeing.

It is good to return borrowed goods. Therefore you should return this automatic rifle to the madman from whom you borrowed it.

2. Converse fallacy of accident - from a special case to a general rule

A bang on the head helped him, so

3. Fallacies of ignoratio elenchi - ignoring the question - irrelevance

argumentum ad baculum - appeal to force

I have a gun/your cards in my hand, therefore I am right

ad misericordiam - to pity

She had a terrible childhood, therefore she didn't do it

ad populum - to the particular people addressing - their attitudes, prejudices, desires

Scots are tight-fisted so it must be McTaggart who hasn't paid his share

Security matters to Hadley Wood people, therefore you should buy a Stop-Thief! alarm
ad hominem - attacking the person (character, circumstances)

Of course, Anna didn't do 'A' levels and often loses her temper, so she must be wrong
ad verecundiam - to awe/modesty - ie to expert opinion or authority sources

Most science lecturers are evolutionists, so the theory of evolution must be true

Come on, nobody believes in a six-day creation or a real hell these days
ad ignorantium - from ignorance

No-one has proved he took it, therefore he didn't

4. Fallacy of circular argument - *petitio principii* - begging the question - conclusion presupposed by premises
Tony is always right; he says the answer is 444, so ...

5. Fallacy of false cause - mislocates the cause of one phenomenon in another that is only seemingly related

e.g. - *post hoc, ergo propter hoc* - 'after this therefore because of this'

weak correlation: Every time I've been to Manchester, it's rained, therefore ...

wrong way round: Of course he does what teacher says, he's teacher's pet

independent cause: Married people eat fewer sweets than singles

chain of events: When I brake, the dog barks ...

only within a certain range: Rain is good for the crops

other factors: Newspapers keep the elephants away

6. Fallacy of complex or many questions - presupposes answers to questions not asked

Have you stopped beating your husband yet ?

Have you always been a liar or are you just starting now ?

Do you like the twins ?

Are you a pacifist or a warmonger ? (**false dilemma**)

7. Fallacy of non sequitur - it does not follow

He's great at tennis, therefore he's bound to be a computer whiz

8. Fallacies of ambiguity

equivocation - using same word in two different ways in the argument

Smokers are rapidly disappearing; Karen is a smoker; therefore

amphiboly/accents - grammar or emphasis means can be taken two ways

The governor says, 'Save soap and waste paper'

Men are considered equal Men are considered equal

composition - argue from parts to whole

Each sentence is well-constructed, so the book is well-constructed

division - argue from whole to parts

It's a prayerful church and she's a member, so she's a prayerful woman

9. Straw man fallacy - opponent's position is misrepresented by misquotation, exaggeration and the weaker form of his/her arguments then defeated etc

10. Slippery slope fallacy

Start raising your hands when you sing and you'll end up claiming to give prophecies as authoritative as the Bible

BRIAN YODER'S FALLACY ZOO

A. Fallacies of Distraction

1. *False Dilemma*: two choices are given when in fact there are three or more options
2. *From Ignorance*: because something is not known to be true, it is assumed to be false
3. *Slippery Slope*: a series of increasingly unacceptable consequences is drawn
4. *Complex Question*: two unrelated points are conjoined as a single proposition

B. Appeals to Motives in Place of Support

1. *Appeal to Force*: the reader is persuaded to agree by force
2. *Appeal to Pity*: the reader is persuaded to agree by sympathy
3. *Consequences*: the reader is warned of unacceptable consequences
4. *Prejudicial Language*: value or moral goodness is attached to believing the author
5. *Popularity*: a proposition is argued to be true because it is widely held to be true

C. Changing the Subject

1. *Attacking the Person*:
 - (1) the person's character is attacked
 - (2) the person's circumstances are noted
 - (3) the person does not practise what is preached
2. *Appeal to Authority*:
 - (1) the authority is not an expert in the field
 - (2) experts in the field disagree
 - (3) the authority was joking, drunk, or in some other way not being serious
3. *Anonymous Authority*: the authority in question is not named
4. *Style Over Substance*: the manner in which an argument (or arguer) is presented is felt to affect the truth of the conclusion

D. Inductive Fallacies

1. *Hasty Generalization*: the sample is too small to support an inductive generalization about a population
2. *Unrepresentative Sample*: the sample is unrepresentative of the sample as a whole
3. *False Analogy*: the two objects or events being compared are relevantly dissimilar
4. *Slothful Induction*: the conclusion of a strong inductive argument is denied despite the evidence to the contrary
5. *Fallacy of Exclusion*: evidence which would change the outcome of an inductive argument is excluded from consideration

E. Fallacies Involving Statistical Syllogisms

1. *Accident*: a generalization is applied when circumstances suggest that there should be an exception
2. *Converse Accident*: an exception is applied in circumstances where a generalization should apply

F. Causal Fallacies

1. *Post Hoc Ergo Propter Hoc*: because one thing follows another, it is held to cause the other
2. *Joint effect*: one thing is held to cause another when in fact they are both the joint effects of an underlying cause
3. *Insignificant*: one thing is held to cause another, and it does, but it is insignificant compared to other causes of the effect
4. *Wrong Direction*: the direction between cause and effect is reversed
5. *Complex Cause*: the cause identified is only a part of the entire cause of the effect

G. Missing the Point

1. *Begging the Question*: the truth of the conclusion is assumed by the premises
2. *Irrelevant Conclusion*: an argument in defense of one conclusion instead proves a different conclusion
3. *Straw Man*: the author attacks an argument different from (and weaker than) the opposition's best argument

H. Fallacies of Ambiguity

1. *Amphiboly*: the structure of a sentence allows two different interpretations
2. *Accent*: the emphasis on a word or phrase suggests a meaning contrary to what the sentence actually says

I. Category Errors

1. *Composition*: because the attributes of the parts of a whole have a certain property, it is argued that the whole has that property
2. *Division*: because the whole has a certain property, it is argued that the parts have that property

J. Non Sequitur

1. *Affirming the Consequent*: any argument of the form: If A then B, B, therefore A
2. *Denying the Antecedent*: any argument of the form: If A then B, Not A, thus Not B

3. *Inconsistency*: asserting that contrary or contradictory statements are both true
4. *Stolen Concept*: using a concept while attacking a concept on which it logically depends

References

- Barker, Stephen F. *The Elements of Logic*. Fifth Edition. McGraw-Hill, 1989.
- Cedarblom, Jerry, and Paulsen, David W. *Critical Reasoning*. Third Edition. Wadsworth, 1991.
- Copi, Irving M., and Cohen, Carl. *Introduction to Logic*. Eighth Edition. Macmillan, 1990.

ANOTHER LIST – FROM A MORMON SITE

<http://www.aros.net/~wenglund/Logic101a.htm> - Mormon site – 19 Feb 2007

Fallacies based on faulty logic

- **Accident**: a generalization is applied when circumstances suggest there should be an exception.
- **Affirming the consequent**: asserting that because if A then B, therefore B then A. A variation of this is the fallacy of converting the conditional: if A then B, therefore **if** B then A.
- **Begging the question** (petitio principii): the premises are as questionable as the conclusions reached.
- **Circular reasoning** (circulus in demonstrando) : attempting to support a proposition with an argument that presupposes the proposition, or the truth of the conclusion is assumed by the premises.
- **Converse accident**: an exception is applied in circumstances where a generalization should apply, or a general rule is formed by examining only a few specific cases which aren't representative of all possible cases.
- **Denying the antecedent**: asserting that if A then B, therefore not A not B.
- **Equivocation**: elements (such as definitions) of one's argument change as the discussion proceeds.
- **Fallacy of composition**: because the attributes of the parts of the whole have a certain property, it is argued that the whole has that property, or the property shared by a number of different items, is also shared by a collection of those items.
- **Fallacy of decomposition or division**: because the whole has a certain property, it is argued that the parts have that property.
- **Fallacy fallacy** (argumentum ad logicam): a proposition is false because it has been presented as the conclusion of a fallacious argument (fallacious arguments can arrive at a true conclusion).
- **Illicite major**: the predicate of the conclusion talks about all of something, but the premises only mention some cases of the term or idea in the predicate.
- **Illicite minor** (argumentum ad logicam): the subject of the conclusion talks about all of something, but the premises only mention some cases of the term or idea in the subject.
- **Inconsistency**: asserting that contrary or contradictory statements are both true.
- **Irrelevant conclusion** (ignoratio elechi): an argument in defence of one conclusion instead proves a different conclusion.
- **Non-sequitur**: offering a conclusion that does not follow logically from the premise or the facts.
- **Oversimplification** (Reductio ad absurdum): reducing a situation or argument to an inaccurate or absurd statement.
- **Slothful induction**: the conclusion of a strong inductive argument is denied despite the evidence to the contrary.
- **Special pleading (double standards) and self-undermining reasoning**: refusing to apply the same principles to oneself that one applies to others.
- **Stolen concept**: using a concept while denying another concept upon which the former logically depends.

Fallacies based on irrelevant information, issue avoidance, or distractions

- **Ad hominem**: a direct attack against the person, the persons circumstances, or the belief that the person doesn't practice what she/he preaches, rather than dealing with the opposing argument. (Similar to [Humor and Ridicule](#).)
- **Anonymous authority**: the authority in question is not named.
- **Appeal to authority** (argumentum ad verecundiam): citing someone who is incompetent, or non-objective, or lacking specific scholastic or experiential background; or the experts in the field disagree; or the authority was joking, drunk, or in some other way not being serious.
- **Appeal to celebrity**: using someone's celebrity to support a claim.
- **Appeal to numbers** (argumentum ad numerum) or majority, or popularity: asserting that the acceptance of an idea by a majority, or by a large number of people, is reason to believe it.
- **Appeal to people (argumentum ad populum), misery (ad misericordiam), pity, or emotions**: the use of prejudicial language or an emotional ploy to win over people to one's side.

- **Appeal to tradition** (argumentum ad antiquitatem): asserting that something is true or good because it is old(er).
- **Bandwagon, peer pressure, ostracism**: appeals to the need for belonging.
- **Fallacy of opposition**: those who disagree with you must be wrong and not thinking straight.
- **Genetic fallacy or poisoning the well**: the source of, or supposed motivation behind, the idea determines its worth.
- **Guilt by association**: attacking the idea because of those who support it, or make spurious links between publicly favorable things and publicly unfavorable things.
- **Humor and ridicule**: using inappropriate humor or ridicule to avoid the issue, cast unwarranted aspersions, or deflect attention away from the discussion. Examples: .
- **Multiple questions or assertions** (plurium interrogation): asking a complex question or a series of questions, or stating a complex assertion or multiple assertions, while only allowing for a single simple response, and then assuming the oppositions inability to adequately respond is indication that their position is wrong.
- **Nothing but objections**: continually raising objections as a means of avoiding the issue.
- **Rationalization**: making excuses instead of addressing the issue.
- **Red herring**: attempting to support one proposition by arguing for a different one entirely, or dodging the main argument by going off on a tangent.
- **Shifting the burden of proof**: demanding that the person denying an assertion prove his/her case, whereas the burden of proof is upon the person who argues the position.
- **Slippery slope**: one thing leads to another.
- **Style over substance**: the manner in which the argument is presented or arguer is presented is felt to affect the truth of the conclusion.
- **Tu quoque or "two wrongs make a right"**: dodging the main argument by including the opposition in the blame ("you did it to"), or justifying an action because one's opponent has performed it.

Fallacies based on the absence of information

- **Ad lapidem**: dismissing a statement as absurd or false without demonstrating it to be such.
- **A priorism**: existing in the mind prior to and independent experience or evidence. Attempting to deduce facts from general abstractions, principles, and laws, to the specific, rather than inducing from facts.
- **Arguing from silence** (argumentum ad ignorantiam): argument based on the unknown--something is considered valid because it is not proved false or something is considered false because it is not proved true.
- **Generalization**: asserting a universal statement unsupported by evidence. Examples: , .
- **Jumping to conclusions** (audiatur et altera pars): arguing from unstated premises, or drawing a conclusion absent supportive facts.
- **Lip service**: verbal agreement unsupported in action or true conviction. Examples: .
- **Phantom cause** (non causa pro causa): something is identified as the cause of an event, but it has not actually been shown to be the cause.
- **Relativism**: asserting that because there are no applicable objective truths, the truthfulness of a proposition is grounded in the respective perceptions of each individual or group.
- **Subjectivism**: asserting a proposition as true simply because one wishes or believes it to be true.
- **Subverted support**: the phenomenon being explained does not exist.
- **Untestability or argument to the future**: the verity or accuracy of the evidence, premise, or conclusion, cannot currently, or perhaps ever, be tested, or verification lie somewhere in the future.

Fallacies based on misleading or errant information, or faulty conceptualizing

- **Anecdotal evidence or confabulation**: using stories and personal experiences as evidence in support of universal principles.
- **Card stacking and fallacy of exclusion** (suppressed quantification): using selected evidence to make one's side look favorable, or omitting evidence that would undermine an argument.
- **Corrupt Source**: support for one's argument comes from a source one considers corrupt.
- **Fallacy of interrogative presupposition**: loaded questions or statements (i.e "have you stopped beating your wife).
- **Fallacy of repetition** (argumentum ad nauseam): an assertion is considered more likely to be true the more often it is stated.
- **False dichotomy** (bifurcation), "either/or", or the "all-or-nothing" mistake: presenting only two options (typically where both are are undesirable) where multiple options exist.
- **False metaphor or analogy**: ambiguous comparison with more relevant dissimilarities than similarities.
- **Faulty causal assumption** (post hoc ergo propter hoc): assuming the fact that one event follows another indicates that the two are causally related.

- **Faulty causal direction:** the direction between cause and effect is reversed.
- **Faulty causal generalization** (non causa pro causa): taking one event to be the cause of another when there is not enough evidence, or when there is no causal relationship.
- **Faulty causal presumption** (cum hoc ergo propter hoc): asserting the fact that two events occur together means that they are causally related.
- **Faulty causal significance:** one thing is held to cause another, and it does, but it is insignificant compared other causes of the effect.
- **Faulty complex cause:** the cause identified is only a part of the entire cause of the effect.
- **Gambler's mistake:** misapplying the statistics of a group to a single situation.
- **Historical parallelism:** similarities in the structure or wording of ideas from two different sources is proof that the one source borrowed (or plagiarized) the idea from the other source.
- **Idiosyncratic language:** charging words with personal meaning which alter their meaning.
- **"No true Scotsman. . ."** fallacy: an argument that takes the form of: "no Scotsman puts sugar on his porridge", which is countered with "my friend Angus likes sugar with his porridge", but is followed by the rejoinder, "Ah yes, but no **true** Scotsman puts sugar on his porridge".
- **Occam's razor fallacy**, or the principle of parsimony: "less is more, and more is less", "plurality should not be posited without necessity", or "the simpler the explanation the better".
- **Misuse of etymology:** asserting that words should remain close to their etymological roots, and using such to come to a certain conclusion.
- **Overprecision:** rejecting a concept as unusable because it has borderline cases or because the definition, phrasing, syntax, grammar, or structure of the proposition or argument is not perfect.
- **Paradigm or cultural fallacy:** taking one's own encapsulated world view, or system of thought (paradigm), or culture, as the standard by which all other paradigms may be judged.
- **Personification:** attributing human traits to other creatures or reading purpose into inanimate configurations.
- **Quoting out of context:** manipulating a quote either from an authority, or from one's opponent, in such a way that the original meaning of the statement is altered.
- **Reification** or hypostatization: treating a conceptualization as if it represented a concrete.
- **Self-righteousness:** confusing good intentions with actual good or truth.
- **Shifting the accent:** altering the meaning, but not the literal truth, of a reported statement by falsely emphasizing certain words.
- **Straw man:** attempting to refute one's opponent's proposition by attacking the misrepresentation of the opponent's position.
- **Sweeping generalities** (dicto simpliciter): applying a principle to a specific situation while ignoring the context under which the principle was formed.
- **Wicked alternative:** attempting to support one proposition by denouncing another, when the second is not opposite of the first.

Fallacies based on insufficient or ambiguous information

- **Ad hoc hypothesis:** hypothesis used to explain away facts that seem to refute one's theory.
- **Amphiboly and glittering generalities:** using ambiguous language or generalized terms to push forth a claim or obfuscate the meaning.
- **Fallacy of the beard:** that you cannot come to a conclusion because one thing differs from another only in degree. (The name of the fallacy derives from the difficulty of determining when exactly someone has a beard).
- **Hasty generalization:** stating premises, or drawing conclusions, based on too little information, or generalizing from too few particulars that are probably not representative of an entire group.
- **Vague similarities:** asserting that two situations or existants are similar without specifying the properties they share.
- **Undistributed middle:** arguing that things are in some way similar without specifying in what way they are similar, or two separate categories are said to be connected because they share a common property.

ET 2.1 – INTRODUCTION TO CHRISTIAN ETHICS

“Our Moral Wasteland”

In *Moral Evasion* (Centre for Policy Studies, 1998) David Selbourne laments ‘new things’ in morality:

“Is it a new moral thing, or an old, that a lesbian couple of practising self insemination should before breaking up their partnership, have had two DIY babies using a pickle jar and syringe ? Or that another similar couple should purchase the frozen sperm of a stranger via the Internet ? ... Is it an old moral thing, or a new moral thing, that there is now an arson attack in at least three schools every day? Or that one in three churches can expect to be the target of an attack of some kind - theft, vandalism, arson - each year? Or that malicious vandalism is now the biggest cause of railway accidents ? Or that 86 per cent of alarm calls in the Metropolitan Police area are shown to be false? Or that trees and shrubs planted in memory of the victims of Dunblane were stolen within days from the local cemetery?”

He goes on to protest that in spite of this, there is a refusal to engage in serious, thorough ethical debate:

“And yet there are, everywhere, evasions. These seek to show, and have us believe, that nothing can any longer be done about our moral condition, or that nothing *needs* to be done about it, since there is nothing much at fault with it in the first place. **The cynicism and amorality with which some address our moral and social confusion thus are a further cause of our ills.**

“ ‘The moral issue is dead,’ declares Hugo Young in *The Guardian*. ‘The family has had it’, says Sara Maitland, again in *The Guardian*, seeming to gloat over its “terminal sickness.” “When politicians talk about strengthening the family, liberals reach for their revolvers,” says Polly Toynbee, also in *The Guardian*. “Families are by their nature Darwinian units,” argues Simon Jenkins, demeaningly in *The Times*.”

He sees moral evasion as both root and fruit of this cynicism and denial. And then goes on to list the **11 arguments** which he believes recur when a moral problem is presented to ethical radicals and which are **used to paralyse real debate about right and wrong:**

1. “there is nothing you can do about it, or not much”;
2. “it has never been any different”;
3. “there is no quick fix” for a given ethical dilemma;
4. “this is the price of a free society”;
5. “you must move with the tide”;
6. “there is no use turning the clock back”;
7. the problem is “much more complex than you think”;
8. “it’s beyond the reach of the law”;
9. “you are focussing on the wrong issue”
10. “people in glass houses shouldn’t ...” - “who are you to talk?”
11. and the basic evasion that, since “everyone does it”, how can you object?

Selbourne concludes:

“Evasion and falsehood and are employed to give the slip to the idea that, common moral rules can and should exist. There has not been, since the French Revolution, a greater concern for, and insistence upon, the promotion and expansion of individual rights in an already deeply free society. **Yet this culture of rights co-exists with a cynicism about the distinction between right and wrong.** There seems to be no doubt about the former and every doubt, assiduously promoted, about the latter. It is a drastic combination.”

David Selbourne lists the **11 arguments** which he believes recur when a moral problem is presented to ethical radicals and which are **used not to further but to paralyse and evade real debate about right and wrong:**

Exercise:

You are on the *Today* programme, or on *Any Questions* or *Question Time*. Or you are in the pub, on the doorstep, outside Southgate tube. You have stated some moral demand either because expressly asked about it or as part of your elucidation of humankind’s sin problem. It is met with one of these evasions. Formulate 2-3 one-line responses to each.

1. “there is nothing you can do about it, or not much”

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4. "this is the price of a free society"
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6. "there is no use turning the clock back"
7. the problem is "much more complex than you think"
8. "it's beyond the reach of the law"
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10. "people in glass houses shouldn't ..." - "who are you to talk?"
11. and the basic evasion that, since "everyone does it", how can you object?

Definitions Of Philosophical Terms

(Warning: these definitions lack sufficient precision to warrant their use in assignments for this module !)

- **hermeneutics:** What I mean
- **logic:** Why I'm right
- **apologetics:** Why you're wrong
- **fallacy:** Why you don't even know you're wrong
- **epistemology:** How I know I'm right and you're wrong
- **existential:** Don't feel bad: everyone is wrong
- **post-modern:** Who cares if I'm right or wrong
- **systemic:** Your wrongness goes deep
- **neo-:** You're as wrong as those old guys
- **crypto-:** I'm the only one who knows your wrongness
- **paradoxical:** It only looks like I'm wrong
- **hyper-:** You'd be right if you could learn to state things paradoxically
- **grand meta-narrative:** He thinks he's right about everything
- **paleo-:** You're as wrong as that new-fangled stuff
- **phenomenal:** I only seem wrong
- **transcendental:** If anyone's right, I must be
- **false consciousness:** Deep down you know I'm right
- **platonism:** I know the very Form of rightness
- **categorical imperative:** If you're right, let's make it a universal law
- **problematize:** I'll show you how wrong you really are
- **ontological argument:** I am so right that none greater can be conceived
- **epiphenomenon:** This sentence is neither right nor wrong, as it is the product of a chemical reaction.
- **post-:** Now we're finally right
- **eclectic:** You are wrong in a lot of different ways
- **synthesis:** You are so wrong that you are right
- **presuppositional:** I'm right and I won't even discuss it with you
- **-istic:** You started with something good and made it really stupid
- **dialectic:** I'm right, but then again, I may be wrong
- **teleological:** You've got everything backwards
- **a priori:** We'll just assume that I am right
- **a posteriori:** Having seen who won, I can assure you I was on that side all the time