
LAWS OF LOGIC

This law is often referred to as the most important of the first principles, Aristotle makes the point that,

every science begins with them and are the foundations upon which all knowledge rests. First principles are the fundamental truths from which inferences are made and on which conclusions are based. They are self-evident, and they can be thought of as both the underlying and the governing principles of a worldview.¹

The law of non-contradiction is one of the most important laws of logical thought, in fact, one textbook author goes so far as to say that this law “is considered the foundation of logical reasoning.”² Another professor of philosophy at University College London says that “a theory in which this law fails...is an inconsistent theory.”³ A great example of this *inconsistency* can be found in the wonderful book *Philosophy for Dummies* that fully expresses the crux of the point made throughout this work:

*Statement: There is no such thing as absolute truth.*⁴

By applying the law of non-contradiction to this statement, one will be able to tell if this statement is coherent enough to even consider thinking about. Are you ready? The first question should be, “is this an absolute statement?” Is the statement making an ultimate, absolute claim about the nature of truth? If so, it is actually asserting what it is trying to deny, and so is self-deleting – more simply, it is logically incoherent as a comprehensible position⁵ as it is in violation of the law of non-contradiction. Some other examples are as follows, for clarity’s sake:

- a) “All truth is relative!” (Is that a relative truth?);
- b) “There are no absolutes!” (Are you absolutely sure?);
- c) “Its true for you but not for me!” (Is that statement true just for you, or is it for everyone?)⁶

In short, contrary *beliefs* are possible, but contrary *truths* are not possible.⁷

Many will try to reject logic in order to accept mutually contradictory beliefs; often times religious pluralism⁸ is the topic with which many try to suppress these universal laws in separating religious

¹ Norman L. Geisler & Peter Bocchino, *Unshakeable Foundations*, 19.

² Manuel Velasquez, *Philosophy: A Text with Readings* (Belmont, CA: Wadsworth, 2001), p. 51.

³ Ted Honderich, ed., *The Oxford Companion to Philosophy* (New York, NY: Oxford Univ Press, 1995), p. 625.

⁴ Tom Morris, *Philosophy for Dummies*, 46.

⁵ *Ibid.*

⁶ Norman L. Geisler and Frank Turek, *I Don't Have Enough Faith to Be an Atheist* (Wheaton, IL: Crossway Books, 2004), 40.

⁷ *Ibid.*, 38.

⁸ *Religious Pluralism* – “the belief that every religion is true. Each religion provides a genuine encounter with the Ultimate.” Norman L. Geisler, *Baker Encyclopedia of Apologetics* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Books, 1999), 598.

claims that are mutually exclusive. Professor Roy Clouser puts into perspective persons that try to minimize differences by throwing logical rules to the wayside:

The program of rejecting logic in order to accept mutually contradictory beliefs is not, however, just a harmless, whimsical hope that somehow logically incompatible beliefs can both be true... *it results in nothing less than the destruction of any and every concept we could possess.* Even the concept of rejecting the law of non-contradiction depends on assuming and using that law, since without it the concept of rejecting it could neither be thought nor stated.⁹

Dr. Clouser then goes on to show how a position of psychologist Erich Fromm is “self-assumptively incoherent.”¹⁰ What professor Clouser is saying is that this is not a game. Dr. Alister McGrath

⁹ Roy A. Clouser, *The Myth of Religious Neutrality: An Essay on the Hidden Role of Religious Belief in Theories* (Notre Dame, IN: Notre Dame Press, 2005), 178 (emphasis added).

¹⁰ A small snippet for clarity's sake:

Fromm's position is also an example of this same dogmatic selectivity. He presents his view as though there are reasons for rejecting the law of non-contradiction, and then argues that his view of the divine (he calls it "ultimate reality") logically follows from that rejection. He ignores the fact that to make any logical inference — to see that one belief "logically follows from" another — means that the belief which is said to "follow" is required on pain of contradicting oneself. Having denied all basis for any inference, Fromm nevertheless proceeds to infer that reality itself must be an all-encompassing mystical unity which harmonizes all the contradictions which logical thought takes to be real. He then further infers that since human thought cannot help but be contradictory, ultimate reality cannot be known by thought. He gives a summary of the Hindu, Buddhist, and Taoist expressions of this same view, and again infers that accepting their view of the divine requires him to reject the biblical idea of God as a knowable, individual, personal Creator. He then offers still another logical inference when he insists that:

- Opposition is a category of man's mind, not itself an element of reality... Inasmuch as God represents the ultimate reality, and inasmuch as the human mind perceives reality in contradictions, no positive statement can be made about God.

In this way Fromm ends by adding self-referential incoherency to the contradictions and self-assumptive incoherency already asserted by his theory. For he makes the positive statement about God that no positive statements about God are possible.

Ibid., 178-179. In this excellent work Dr. Clouser shows elsewhere the impact of logic on some major positions of thought:

As an example of the strong sense of this incoherency, take the claim sometimes made by **Taoists** that “Nothing can be said of the Tao.” Taken without qualification (which is not the way it is intended), this is self-referentially incoherent since to say “Nothing can be said of the Tao” is to say something of the Tao. Thus, when taken in reference to itself, the statement cancels its own truth. As an example of the weak version of self-referential incoherency, take the claim once made by **Freud** that every belief is a product of the believer's unconscious emotional needs. If this claim were true, it would have to be true of itself since it is a belief of Freud's. It therefore requires itself to be nothing more than the product of Freud's unconscious emotional needs. This would not necessarily make the claim false, but it would mean that even if it were true neither Freud nor anyone else could ever know that it is. The most it would allow anyone to say is that he or she couldn't help but believe it. The next criterion says that a theory must not be incompatible with any belief we have to assume for the theory to be true. I will call a theory that violates this rule “self-assumptively incoherent.” As an example of this incoherence, consider the claim made by some philosophers that all things are exclusively physical [**atheistic-naturalism**]. This has been explained by its advocates to mean that nothing has any property or is governed by any law that is not a physical property or a physical law. But the very sentence expressing this claim, the sentence “All things are exclusively physical,” must be assumed to possess a linguistic meaning. This is not a physical property, but unless the sentence had it, it would not be a sentence; it would be nothing but physical sounds or marks that would not) linguistically signify any meaning whatever and thus could not express any claim — just as a group of pebbles, or clouds, or leaves, fails to signify any meaning or express any claim. Moreover, to assert this exclusivist materialism is the same as claiming it is true, which is another nonphysical property; and the claim that it is true further assumes that its denial would have to be false, which is a relation guaranteed by logical, not physical, laws. (Indeed, any theory which denies the existence of logical laws is instantly and irredeemably self-assumptively incoherent since that very denial is proposed as true in a way that logically excludes its

responds to the religious pluralism of theologian John Hick by showing just how self-defeating this position is:

The belief that all religions are ultimately expressions of the same transcendent reality is at best illusory and at worst oppressive – illusory because it lacks any substantiating basis and oppressive because it involves the systematic imposition of the agenda of those in positions of intellectual power on the religions and those who adhere to them. The illiberal imposition of this pluralistic metanarrative¹¹ on religions is ultimately a claim to mastery – both in the sense of having a Nietzschean authority and power to mold material according to one’s will, and in the sense of being able to relativize all the religions by having access to a privileged standpoint.¹²

As professor McGrath points out above, John Hick is applying an *absolute religious claim* while at the same time saying there *are no absolute religious claims* to religious reality. **It is self-assumptively incoherent.** Anthropologist William Sumner argues against the logical position when he says that “every attempt to win an outside standpoint from which to reduce the whole to an absolute philosophy of truth and right, based on an unalterable principle, is delusion.”¹³ Authors Francis Beckwith and Gregory Koukl respond to this self-defeating claim by showing that Sumner is making a strong claim here about knowledge:

He says that all claims to know objective moral truth are false because we are all imprisoned in our own cultural and are incapable of seeing beyond the limits of our own biases. He concludes, therefore, that moral truth is relative to culture and that no objective standard exists. Sumner’s analysis falls victim to the same error committed by religious pluralists who see all religions as equally valid.¹⁴

The authors continue:

Sumner’s view, however, is self-refuting. In order for him to conclude that all moral claims are an illusion, he must first escape the illusion himself. He must have a full and accurate view of the entire picture.... Such a privileged view is precisely what Sumner denies. Objective assessments are illusions, he claims, but then he offers his own “objective” assessment. It is as if he were saying, “We’re all blind,” and then adds, “but I’ll tell you what the world really looks like.” This is clearly contradictory.¹⁵

being false.) What this shows is that the claim “All things are exclusively physical” must itself be assumed to have nonphysical properties and be governed by nonphysical laws or it could neither be understood nor be true. Thus, no matter how clever the supporting arguments for this claim may seem, the claim itself is incompatible with assumptions that are required for it to be true. It is therefore self-assumptively incoherent in the strong sense.

Ibid., 84-85 (emphasis added).

¹¹ *Metanarratives, or, Grand Narratives* – “big stories, stories of mythic proportions – that claim to be able to account for, explain and subordinate all lesser, little, local, narratives.” Jim Powell, *Postmodernism for Beginners* (New York, NY: Writers and Readers, 1998), 29.

¹² Alister E. McGrath, *Passion for Truth: the Intellectual Coherence of Evangelicalism* (Downers Grove, IL: IVP, 1996), 239.

¹³ William Graham Sumner, *Folkways* (Chicago, IL: Ginn and Company, 1906), in Francis Beckwith and Gregory Koukl, *Relativism: Feet Planted firmly in Mid-Air* (Grand Rapids, Michigan: Baker Books, 1998), 46-47.

¹⁴ Francis Beckwith and Gregory Koukl, *Relativism: Feet Planted Firmly in Mid-Air* (Grand Rapids, Michigan: Baker Books, 1998), 47.

¹⁵ Ibid., 48

Philosopher Roger Scruton drives this point home when he says, “A writer who says that there are no truths, or that all truth is ‘merely negative,’ is asking you not to believe him. So don’t.”¹⁶ Another example comes from the belief that that all morality can be explained in naturalistic, evolutionary means for survival of the fittest. Paul Copan points out quite adeptly that all one has to do is show how the critic’s position collapses on its own premises:

A couple of years ago, on a plane to Boston I sat next to a rather hard-nosed atheist. He spoke to me in a rather condescending tone, as though belief in God were old-fashioned and quaint -- though intriguing. When I talked with him about objective moral values, he maintained that they do not exist. He said, “What we call morality is nothing more than an attempt to survive and reproduce. In fact, all that we do is nothing more than our struggle to survive and reproduce.” I replied, “Does this mean that your atheistic beliefs are nothing more than an attempt to survive and reproduce? If you take this route, then you’ll have to admit that both your atheism and my theism spring from the same underlying instinct to survive and reproduce, and there’s no way to tell which of us is correct -- or if we’re both wrong.”¹⁷

After showing the futility of such a position I would then assume the skeptics position to be true in order to show the *backfiring aspect* that lends to the strength of the theistic position over that of the atheists position. Ask:

Assuming the validity of the “underlying instinct to survive and reproduce” then, out of the two positions (belief and non-belief) available for us to choose from which would better apply to being the most fit if the fittest is “an individual... [that] reproduces more successfully...”?¹⁸ The woman that believes in God is less likely to have abortions and more likely to have larger families

¹⁶ *Modern Philosophy* (New York, NY: Penguin, 1996), 6. Found in: John Blanchard, *Does God Believe in Atheists?* (Darlington, England: Evangelical Press, 2000), 172.

¹⁷ Paul Copan, *That’s Just Your Interpretation: Responding to Skeptics Who Challenge Your Faith* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Books/Academic, 2001), 43.

¹⁸ From my son’s 9th grade biology textbook: Susan Feldkamp, ex. ed., *Modern Biology* (Austin, TX: Holt, Rineheart, and Winston, 2002), 288; “...organisms that are better suited to their environment than others produce more offspring” *American Heritage Science Dictionary, 1st ed.* (Boston, MA: Houghton Mifflin, 2005), cf. natural selection, 422; “fitness (in evolution) The condition of an organism that is well adapted to its environment, as measured by its ability to reproduce itself” *Oxford Dictionary of Biology, New Edition* (New York, NY: Oxford University Press, 1996), cf. fitness, 202; “fitness In an evolutionary context, the ability of an organism to produce a large number of offspring that survive to reproduce themselves” Norah Rudin, *Dictionary of Modern Biology* (Hauppauge, NY: Barron’s Educational Series, 1997), cf. fitness, 146.

than their secular counterparts.¹⁹ Does that mean that natural selection will result in a greater number of believers than non-believers?²⁰

According to the atheists *own stated position*, which of the two beliefs are more advantages? You see, the believer doesn't need in this case to quote a Scripture or insert something into another's belief system. All the believer has to do is show how a person's idea or belief or statement destructs under its own weight. This idea will come up again, but this is a good introduction to what a worldview is and some of the principles that every worldview must first assume, that is, *first principles*. One last example of a self-refuting/incoherent worldview comes from *A Handbook for Christian Philosophy*, by L. Russ Bush. After giving a basic definition of what a worldview is,²¹ Dr. Bush goes on to explain how differing worldviews can interpret reality and then he applies some first principles to the matter:

¹⁹ Dinesh D'Souza points to this in his recent book, *What's So Great About Christianity*:

Russia is one of the most atheist countries in the world, and abortions there outnumber live births by a ratio of two to one. Russia's birth rate has fallen so low that the nation is now losing 700,000 people a year. Japan, perhaps the most secular country in Asia, is also on a kind of population diet: its 130 million people are expected to drop to around 100 million in the next few decades. Canada, Australia, and New Zealand find themselves in a similar predicament. Then there is Europe. The most secular continent on the globe is decadent in the quite literal sense that its population is rapidly shrinking. Birth rates are abysmally low in France, Italy, Spain, the Czech Republic, and Sweden. The nations of Western Europe today show some of the lowest birth rates ever recorded, and Eastern European birth rates are comparably low. Historians have noted that Europe is suffering the most sustained reduction in its population since the Black Death in the fourteenth century, when one in three Europeans succumbed to the plague. Lacking the strong religious identity that once characterized Christendom, atheist Europe seems to be a civilization on its way out. Nietzsche predicted that European decadence would produce a miserable "last man" devoid of any purpose beyond making life comfortable and making provision for regular fornication. Well, Nietzsche's "last man" is finally here, and his name is Sven. Eric Kaufmann has noted that in America, where high levels of immigration have helped to compensate for falling native birth rates, birth rates among religious people are almost twice as high as those among secular people. This trend has also been noticed in Europe." What this means is that, by a kind of natural selection, the West is likely to evolve in a more religious direction. This tendency will likely accelerate if Western societies continue to import immigrants from more religious societies, whether they are Christian or Muslim. Thus we can expect even the most secular regions of the world, through the sheer logic of demography, to become less secular over time.... My conclusion is that it is not religion but atheism that requires a Darwinian explanation. Atheism is a bit like homosexuality: one is not sure where it fits into a doctrine of natural selection. Why would nature select people who mate with others of the same sex, a process with no reproductive advantage at all?

(17, 19.). Some other studies and articles of note: Mohit Joshi, "Religious women less likely to get abortions than secular women," *Top Health News*, Health News United States (1-31-08), found at: <http://www.topnews.in/health/religious-women-less-likely-get-abortions-secular-women-2844> (last accessed 8-13-09); Anthony Gottlieb, "Faith Equals Fertility," *Intelligent Life*, a publication of the *Economist* magazine (winter 2008), found at: <http://www.moreintelligentlife.com/story/faith-equals-fertility> (last accessed 8-13-09); W. Bradford Wilcox, "Fertility, Faith, & the Future of the West: A conversation with Phillip Longman," *Christianity Today*, Books & Culture: A Christian Review (5-01-2007), found at: <http://www.christianitytoday.com/bc/2007/mayjun/4.28.html?start=1> (last accessed 8-13-2009); Pippa Norris and Ronald Inglehart, *Sacred and Secular: Religion and Politics Worldwide* (New York, NY: Cambridge University Press, 2004), 3-32, esp. 24-29 -- I recommend this book for deep thinking on the issue.

²⁰ Adapted from a question by a student at a formal debate between Dr. Massimo Pigliucci and Dr. William Lane Craig during the Q&A portion of the debate. (DVD, Christian Apologetics, Biola University, apologetics@biola.edu, product # WLC-RFM14V).

²¹ "A worldview is that basic set of assumptions that gives meaning to one's thoughts. A worldview is the set of assumptions that someone has about the way things are, about what things are, about why things are." L. Russ Bush, *A Handbook for Christian Philosophy* (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 1991), 70.

... most people assume that something exists. There may be someone, perhaps, who believes that nothing exists, but who would that person be? How could he or she make such an affirmation? Sometimes in studying the history of philosophy, one may come to the conclusion that some of the viewpoints expressed actually lead to that conclusion, but no one ever consciously tries to defend the position that nothing exists. It would be a useless endeavor since there would be no one to convince. Even more significantly, it would be impossible to defend that position since, if it were true, there would be no one to make the defense. So to defend the position that nothing exists seems immediately to be absurd and self-contradictory.²²

Take note that Dr. Bush did not pit Christian theism against pantheistic Hinduism, it wasn't East vs. West, he merely enlightened the reader to the self-refuting nature within Eastern thinking itself... it was East vs. the East. While this chapter was not expressly a chapter to refute any particular philosophical or religious position, the adept reader will find – for sure – some great offensive explanatory power herein.²³

²² Ibid.

²³ This is a section from the first chapter of my “book” – [“Introduction: Technology Junkies”](#)