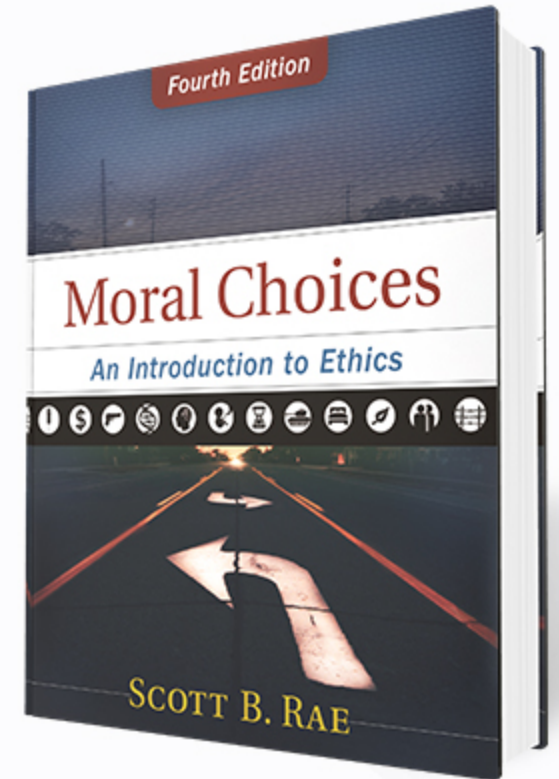


Chapter 1: Why Morality Matters



Introduction: Why does morality matter?

- The Myth of Gyges, (Plato) “gift of invisibility”
- Increasing popular interest in morality, NBC’s *The Good Place*
- Morality matters because
 - It is at the core of life’s questions (e.g., what is the good life?)
 - It is critical in solving the complexities of life in society. (e.g., how does man survive and flourish in community?)
 - One makes daily moral choices.
- Morality is important to consider because human and societal flourishing require that individuals are moral creatures.

Class Schedule

- Jan. 10 — The What and Why of morality and ethics
- Jan. 17 — Ethical Reasoning and Christian Ethics
- Jan. 24 — Making Ethical Decisions
- Jan. 31 — Beginning of Life Issues, Abortion and Reproductive Technologies
- Feb. 7 — End of Life Issues: Euthanasia, Advance Directives, “Right to Die”
- Feb. 14 — War and Violence
- Feb. 21 — Ethics and Economics
- Feb. 28 — Race, Gender, and Diversity

Worldview

- The answers to the core questions of life (e.g., what is the good life?) are rooted in one's worldview which provides the lens used by one to perceive and interpret the world.
 - Metaphysics: What is reality?
 - Epistemology: What can I know about reality?
 - Anthropology: What does it mean to be human? How should we live in light of reality and how can we know what is real?

Terms and Distinctions in Ethics

- **Morality and Ethics**
 - Morality refers to the content of right and wrong
 - Is a specific action morally right or wrong?
 - Ethics deals with the process of arriving at moral conclusions.
 - Ethics is about moral *reasoning and justification*.
- There are four main categories that are associated with the broad heading of ethics.
 - Descriptive ethics: the discipline of attempting to describe a culture's moral thought.
 - **Normative ethics**: the discipline of prescribing a set of moral rules or norms.
 - Meta-ethics: focuses on the meaning, means of knowing, and justification of ethical theories or judgments. What do we mean by the terms good, just, or right?
 - Aretaic ethics: focuses on the virtues of the moral agent, not simply the moral act itself

- Ethical Systems

- Ethical systems can be divided into two categories known as *action-oriented* systems or *virtue-based* systems.
- Under action-oriented systems there are three sub-divisions by which ethical systems may be classified:
 - Deontological: morality based on divine command, natural law, or ethical reasoning
 - Teleological: morality based on the outcome, consequentialism, utilitarianism, ethical egoism
 - Relativism: no right or wrong, morality based on culture or personal preference

- Scott Rae's approach is *action-oriented* but we should not forget the role of virtue

- Dr. Douglas Groothuis adds these to what Rae misses
 - Most of our decisions are not premeditated, but flow from our character (Matt. 7:24-27).
 - We are called to live virtuously in preparation for moral decisions made in an instant (Prov. 8; Jam. 1:1-8).
 - Must combine scripture, prayer, and dialogue with the church as a part of our moral formation (Eph. 6:18; Rom. 15:4).

Terms and Distinctions in Ethics

- Moral realism the approach of the book, *Moral Choices*
 - Moral values and facts exist
 - Moral values and facts are objective (*but may have different applications in different contexts*)
 - Moral values and facts can be known
 - Most people are moral realists in practice, even if inconsistent
- However, there are varying foundations people use for their moral reasoning.
 - Do we root it in God's character or evolution for example?

Morality and the Law

- There is a deep connection between morality and the law.
- The law is only a moral minimum (Matt. 5:20).
- The often heard claim that “you can’t legislate morality” needs to be carefully thought through.
 - If we mean moral behavior it is false.
 - If we mean moral beliefs, motive, or intentions it is true.
- Almost every law is the imposition of someone’s morality.
 - Examples:
 - Adultery is immoral but not illegal (in the west).
 - Lying is immoral and in some cases, as in court, also illegal.

• Church, State and Morality

- The often heard argument is that the constitution establishes a “separation of church and state.”
- That is false.
- The First Amendment guarantees religious freedom by prohibiting the establishment of a national church.
- The Founding Fathers were not simply neutral to religion and its role in the nation’s formation, they were clear about the need of it for democracy.