





How Can Christian Philosophers Improve Their Arguments?



Logical Culture and Critical Thinking

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ABSTRACT The purpose of this paper is to analyse and compare two concepts which tend to be treated as synonymous, and to show the difference between them: these are critical thinking and logical culture. Firstly, we try to show that these cannot be considered identical or strictly equivalent: i.e. that the concept of logical culture includes more than just critical thinking skills. Secondly, we try to show that Christian philosophers, when arguing about philosophical matters and teaching philosophy to students, should not focus only on critical thinking skills, but rather also consider logical culture. This, as we argue, may help to improve debate both within and outside of Christian philosophy.

KEYWORDS Ajdukiewicz, Kazimierz; Christian philosophy; Cracow Circle; critical thinking; Czeżowski, Tadeusz; informal logic; logical culture; Lvov-Warsaw School; Twardowski, Kazimierz.

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One of the main problems in developing any kind of philosophy is its language, and this applies especially to Christian philosophy, which is usually described and expressed using vague terms and metaphors. Therefore, philosophy would certainly benefit from using precise language, clear definitions, and transparent reasoning in line with logical standards of correctness. We could even say that Christian philosophy would benefit from becoming more *critical*—but well, many Christians philosophers would be sceptical towards such a proposal for various reasons. That is why we wish to propose an alternative notion, with a long-standing tradition and many similarities to critical thinking, but at the same time better suited in our view to the needs of Christian philosophers: logical culture.

The notion of critical thinking has arisen and mainly developed in Western philosophy, especially within the Anglo-Saxon philosophical literature. On the other hand, the notion of logical culture is something strictly Polish, and was created and developed in the Lvov-Warsaw School (LWS), a Polish movement of philosophers and logicians initiated by Kazimierz Twardowski at the end of the nineteenth century which included such names as Alfred Tarski, Tadeusz Kotarbiński, Kazimierz Ajdukiewicz, Jan Łukasiewicz, Stanisław Leśniewski, etc. The most apposite characterisation of the LWS as it relates to logical culture was provided by Twardowski himself, who defined it in terms of the postulates of logical thinking and precise language:

the main characteristic of this School is in the formal-methodological domain: it is based on striving for the greatest possible precision and accuracy in thinking and expressing one's thoughts as well as on the most exhaustive justification of what is said and the correctness of proof. (2014, 47–8)

We will start with a short analysis of the notions of logical culture and critical thinking, before seeking to show the difference between them, together with the significance of this difference for Christian philosophy. Our thesis is that the adoption, development and promotion of logical culture by Christian philosophers may prove highly beneficial—even more so than where critical thinking is concerned.

1. THE CONCEPT OF LOGICAL CULTURE

What, exactly, is logical culture (hereinafter LC)? Some Polish logicians, in a text entitled “The Polish School of Argumentation: A Manifesto,” have proposed the following sense for this notion:

the conception of logical culture in research and teaching; opposition to irrationalism and insistence on proper justification of accepted propositions; the broad conception of logic, including, but not limited to, deductive reasoning; and an emphasis on proper inference and other knowledge-gaining procedures, such as defining or questioning. (Budzynska et al. 2014, 273)

This set of characteristics is not, however, complete. The very notion of logical culture was firstly comprehensively described by Tadeusz Czeżowski in 1954, and later by Ajdukiewicz and Tadeusz Kwiatkowski. On the other hand, the notion of LC was present in and used by the members of the LWS much earlier,¹ even if the first proper analysis of it was the one made by Czeżowski (Ajdukiewicz 1985b, 141–2; Johnson and Koszowy 2018; Będkowski 2019).

Although it is not our aim to present a history of the concept of logical culture, it is worth pointing to one of the first uses of the corresponding linguistic expression. In the conclusion to his “Principle of Excluded Middle,” Stanisław Leśniewski stated:

I believe that in this study I managed to keep the promise given in the introduction. I proved that the logical principle of the excluded middle is false in both formulations—categorical and conditional. Hence, I think, the following moral can be drawn: from the point of view of “logical culture” it would be desirable that the handbooks of logic leave out this principle altogether. (1913, 85)

The quotation marks serve, in this case, to express the author’s non-committal attitude towards this phrase. The mention of “logical culture,” however, may be taken to indicate that the term had appeared in the literature and that Leśniewski believed that even when popularizing logic, a certain high standard of precision and accuracy should be maintained.

Twardowski, meanwhile, appealed instead to what he called a “general logical education” (1920). This referred to the intellectual aspects of teaching logic, and only afterwards evolved into the thicker concept of logical culture to be found in Czeżowski’s and Ajdukiewicz’s works. In any case, for representatives of the Lvov-Warsaw School it was important that logic should have some kind of social impact: e.g., through developing knowledge or certain social skills—an approach inspired by the school’s initiator

1. The first mention of “logical culture” comes from E.B. Condillac and H. Scholz, who evaluated the level of logical culture in Poland to be very high.

(see Będkowski 2022). It seems not without significance that the concept of logical culture was created within the milieu of the highly regarded achievements of Polish logicians—in line with Kotarbiński’s opinion that “the name ‘Polish logician’ is a symbol of a kind of mastery, just like the name ‘Italian singer’ refers to mastery in singing” (Kotarbiński 1959, 366).

In Czeżowski’s paper entitled *O kulturze logicznej* we encounter the following:

Logical culture makes us sensitive to truth and falsehood, to the correctness of thoughts and logical fallacies, it educates, we could say, a logical conscience, which is the basis of criticism towards ourselves and towards others. This criticism is a shield against the influence of feelings, superstitions and prejudices that so often distort the logical course of thought. It defends against the temptation to use dishonest polemical tricks, sophisms, and innuendos. So it instils honesty and integrity in thinking. It allows us to rise above everything that disturbs the factual nature of the position at times and to overcome dogmatic obstinacy. It makes us possible to understand opposing positions, it opens the way to rational tolerance, which does not aim to destroy the opponent, but tries to win him or her over. And so logical culture is related to ethical and social culture. It raises people above their opposites and connects them with knots of universal solidarity, pointing the way to the eternal ideals of truth and the good and beauty inherent in it. (Czeżowski 1969, 189)

We can see from the above that there is something more to this idea than just certain reasoning skills and a precision in expressing one’s thoughts. It also includes some ethical traits, such as honesty, charity, tolerance, overcoming one’s own prejudices and, with this, overcoming conflicts. As Czeżowski notes, as a result LC is not something achievable only by individuals: it may also be a property exhibited by the whole of society—its institutions, languages, procedures, etc.

Five years later, Kazimierz Ajdukiewicz sought to develop the concept by differentiating the theoretical and practical components of LC (Ajdukiewicz 1985a, 322). The former consists in the adoption of the basic notions and laws of logic, along with the ability to engage in logical reasoning. The latter is one’s capacity to express one’s thoughts clearly, and to evaluate arguments properly. We may observe here that Ajdukiewicz focuses on only two dimensions of LC: (i) the ability to think and speak clearly, and (ii) knowledge of basic logical laws and notions. These dimensions are closely related to the methodological orientation of the LWS already apparent in what was quoted above. Two fundamental methodological postulates of the

LWS were those of clarity and of justification: these are the ones invoked by Ajdukiewicz, who treats them as central to the concept of logical culture and the teaching of logic (see Brożek et al. 2020; Będkowski 2019).²

The ethical aspect of LC was further developed in 1962 by Tadeusz Kwiatkowski. The latter started out from the concept of “culture” itself, suggesting that we may conclude on the basis of its positive evaluative connotations that any individual who has logical culture also has some moral culture. Kwiatkowski presents the following line of reasoning in support of an ethical dimension to LC:

If knowledge and skills were considered to be sufficient elements constituting culture, it would have to be considered that the realization of culture is possible in any field, both good or bad. For example, one could speak of a culture of organizing death camps, since one could (or perhaps really can!) have both knowledge and skill in this area... .

It seems, however, that such an understanding of the term “culture” would be inconsistent with the meaning fixed for this term by linguistic usage. In line with this meaning, the word “culture” probably means always and only positive values, and above all, eminently positive ones. (1962, 3–4)

At the same time, we can even find a more fitting example to illustrate this point than “death camps.” Simply imagine an individual, properly educated in logic and rhetoric, who has the know-how and skills needed for logical reasoning and arguing, but who for personal motives uses this dishonestly or sophistically to manipulate others. Such a picture clearly conflicts with our sense of what “culture” involves.³ This argument seems to suffice as a basis for assuming a certain level of moral culture as internal to the concept of culture itself: with the implication that logical culture requires a certain *ethos*. On this point, Kwiatkowski clearly disagrees with Ajdukiewicz, showing as he does that exhibiting adequate know-how and

2. According to the latest research, there are two additional methodological postulates: that of diligent exchange of thoughts and that of good work. Together with the postulates of clarity and justification, these define the scope of pragmatic logic: i.e. an interdisciplinary conception of logic in a broad sense.

3. We would categorise this as a semantic argument, in that it hinges on the received meaning of “culture.” It seems to fulfil the criteria for a strong argument, appealing as it does to a conflict with the term’s usage: if, the thinking goes, one accepts that logical culture does not include some sort of moral culture, then one must accept that a sophistic manipulation can be said to be “cultural,” and given that this is not acceptable, LC must include a certain level of moral culture). For more on semantic arguments, see (Pruś 2021).

skill in that area is not itself a sufficient condition for having culture in that same field (Kwiatkowski 1962, 4). On this basis, he proposes the first of the characteristics he attributes to LC: that it (I) requires a certain level of knowledge and ability to act morally (1962, 4).

Further on, Kwiatkowski posits three additional features: (II) a theory of questions and problem formulation, (III) a culture of language, and (IV) a pragmatics of argumentation (pertaining, especially, to the need to adjust arguments to a given audience). Exploring the implications of each of these in turn, we may therefore also say with reference to (II) that LC consists in a competence in asking and answering (in the sense of being able to identify well-formulated questions and avoid pseudo-problems), in providing answers appropriate to the meanings of questions, and in presenting reasons to justify the relevant answers (where this last actually refers to critical thinking skills, construed as being aimed at investigating reasons given in support of beliefs). As regards (III), when talking about a “culture of language” we have in mind Twardowski’s postulate of clarity in expressing thoughts. In this way, LC works to prevent all cases of ambiguity and misunderstanding and related fallacies (e.g., equivocation, semantic manipulation), and to enforce precision (assuming here also an understanding of the theory of definition, of meaning, etc.). Finally, when it comes to (IV), the adjusting of utterances and arguments to suit a given audience, Kwiatkowski refers to the pragmatic aspect of logical culture. He is aware that LC is called for on every occasion where one seeks to communicate something—or, especially, to argue for or against it. We may witness here a resemblance to Perelman and Olbrechts-Tyteca (1969), who just a few years earlier (in *The New Rhetoric*) had introduced a distinction between universal and particular audiences. However, one may also see similarities to the pragma-dialectics proposed in van Eemeren, Grootendorst and Henkemans (1996), or to the maxims of *quantity* and *relevance* of Grice (1975). From this it follows that LC is not only concerned with sustaining a certain ethos, along with criticism and clarity, but also with efficient communication (which itself also includes argumentation). This shows, moreover, that the problem of the relationship between formal and informal logic present in Anglo-Saxon logic in the twentieth century was not an issue for the LWS.⁴ Since both (III) and (IV) refer to the communicative dimension,

4. As R. Johnson and M. Koszowy note: “In the LWS, a marriage between the formal and the informal aspects of reasoning and arguments was seen as quite natural. Hence for LWS, the formal and informal approaches were definitely not treated as incompatible, but rather as complementary” (2018, 200; see also: Brożek 2021). It is worth noting in this context that remarkably tense discussions between proponents of formal and informal approaches

with the former invoking the ability to speak clearly and the latter that of communicating successfully, we may treat these as collectively constituting one feature of LC. We will therefore construe LC in the following terms:

[**def. LC**] an attitude comprising (i) an ethos that forbids the use of logical know-how or skills for morally wrong purposes; (ii) know-how and proficiency in the field of pragmatic logic; (iii) skills in applying know-how and rules for pragmatic logic (e.g., the ability to speak clearly, reason correctly, and adapt to a given communicative situation).

Utilising such a definition, we can refer to the relevant *attitude*—that is, a certain mindset or approach going beyond just knowledge and mental skills relating to thinking and speaking clearly. This will include both knowledge about logic (the theory of definitions, meaning, etc.), and logical skills (formulating and evaluating arguments, detecting logical fallacies, etc.). It will also include the ability to express thoughts in a clear way, in order to avoid misunderstandings or pseudo-problems. Finally, it calls for some sort of specific moral stance that aspires to prevent dishonest fallacies, eristics, sophistry and forms of bias. Having defined the concept of LC, let us now take a brief look at the concept of critical thinking (CT), prior to comparing these two notions.

2. THE CONCEPT OF CRITICAL THINKING

The notion of critical thinking is far more widely embraced, but also much more ambiguous, than LC. It is not just that the Anglo-Saxon tradition has developed the idea of CT: nowadays it is present in education worldwide. It is something we teach students, and also something we investigate, while nevertheless being strictly oriented towards pragmatic logic and argumentation. The concept has been attributed to John Dewey, who defined it in the following terms in 1909:⁵

Active, persistent, and careful consideration of a belief or supposed form of knowledge in the light of the grounds which support it and the further conclusions to which it tends. (1998, 9)

had taken place within the LWS earlier, in the 1920s (Będkowski 2022; Twardowski 1921; Łukasiewicz 1925; Kotarbiński 1925).

5. For a detailed analysis of the history of the development of critical thinking as a social movement, see (Johnson and Koszowy 2018; Będkowski 2019).

It is this spirit that it has been studied and pursued in the twentieth and twenty-first centuries. Let us begin by taking note of some of the most influential characterisations of it that have been given:

[Critical thinking is] (1) an attitude of being disposed to consider in a thoughtful way the problems and subjects that come within the range of one's experience; (2) knowledge of the methods of logical enquiry and reasoning; and (3) some skill in applying those methods. Critical thinking calls for a persistent effort to examine any belief or supposed form of knowledge in the light of the evidence that supports it and the further conclusions to which it tends. (Glaser 1942, 5)

Critical thinking is reasonable, reflective thinking that is focused on deciding what to believe or do. (Ennis 1996, 166)

Critical thinking is that mode of thinking—about any subject, content or problem—in which the thinker improves the quality of his or her thinking by skilfully taking charge of the structures inherent in thinking and imposing intellectual standards upon them. (Paul, Fisher, and Nosich 1993, 4)

Critical thinking is skilled and active interpretation and evaluation of observations and communications, information and argumentation. (Fisher and Scriven 1997, 21)

Critical thinking is the ability to think clearly and rationally about what to do or what to believe. It includes the ability to engage in reflective and independent thinking. Someone with critical thinking skills is able to do the following:

- understand the logical connections between ideas
- identify, construct and evaluate arguments
- detect inconsistencies and common mistakes in reasoning
- solve problems systematically
- identify the relevance and importance of ideas
- reflect on the justification of one's own beliefs and values. (Lau 2004)

Critical thinking, therefore, is to not accept beliefs for which we do not have sufficient justification. We break the postulate of critical thinking contained in the principle of sufficient reason by recklessly giving faith to other people's words and by the influence our feelings and desires have on our beliefs. (Ajdukiewicz 1953, 69; Będkowski 2019, 9)

All of the above definitions align with and serve to deepen Dewey's intuition: CT essentially involves possessing the appropriate skill and know-how with respect to reflective thinking of a logically accountable kind. (Glaser's definition is, in fact, the only one that refers to it as an "attitude.") It assumes a self-conscious approach to thinking, caution in accepting beliefs and drawing conclusions, and clarity in analysing and/or presenting reasoning. Obviously, there is more to say about the history of critical thinking as a social movement, and about other alternative perspectives on CT, but this will suffice for us to arrive at a picture of how CT is normally understood.

One additional point is that it is more common today to include within CT not only logical thinking and thorough evaluation of information, but also an aspiration to open-mindedness, creativity, and fairness, along with certain other moral elements:

Critical thinking is the intellectually disciplined process of actively and skillfully conceptualizing, applying, analysing, synthesizing, and/or evaluating information gathered from, or generated by, observation, experience, reflection, reasoning, or communication, as a guide to belief and action. In its exemplary form, it is based on universal intellectual values that transcend subject matter divisions: clarity, accuracy, precision, consistency, relevance, sound evidence, good reasons, depth, breadth, and fairness. (Elder 2022)

I identify four key features of critical thinking ... These four features include an ability and willingness to: reason logically, reflect metacognitively, become increasingly aware of socio-cultural power structures at play on thinking, and to contribute to the common good. (Bermingham 2015, 422–3)

Critical thinking is a complex process of deliberation which involves a wide range of skills and attitudes. It includes: identifying other people's positions, arguments and conclusions; evaluating the evidence for alternative points of view; weighing up opposing arguments and evidence fairly; being able to read between the lines, seeing behind surfaces, and identifying false or unfair assumptions; recognising techniques used to make certain positions more appealing than others, such as false logic and persuasive devices; reflecting on issues in a structured way, bringing logic and insight to bear; drawing conclusions about whether arguments are valid and justifiable, based on good evidence and sensible assumptions; presenting a point of view in a structured, clear, well-reasoned way that convinces others. (Cottrell 2005, 2)

This idea is highly original, and yet may issue from the argument, already put forward with reference to logical culture, that if CT is something positive, then it cannot be used to serve wrong ends. However, the vast majority of scholars describe it without making any such axiological references: that is, they treat it as neutral from a moral point of view (just like a skill in cookery, or any other craft). At the same time, such broad construals of CT are rather rare and, what is more important, they lack any clear definition of what CT is. For example, in the above-quoted passage Stella Cottrell proposes a very broad (enumerative) characterisation of CT which nevertheless remains incomplete.

Let us therefore propose a definition in line with the aforementioned accounts, and especially with Fischer and Scriven's intuition, which would seem to be the most accurate one offered in the vast number of critical thinking handbooks currently available:

[def. CT] Critical thinking is an ability to think in an orderly and conscious way that enables the analysis and evaluation of information and reasoning.

Having defined the concept of CT, we are now in a position to compare the two concepts we are engaged in exploring with a view to discerning the significant differences between them.

3. THE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN THE CONCEPTS OF LOGICAL CULTURE AND CRITICAL THINKING

It might already be clear that the two notions we are dealing with refer to very similar ideas, and have a lot in common: both are taught in schools and at universities, both are related to logical thinking, analysing, and evaluating beliefs and reasonings, and, finally, both seek to cultivate alertness to logical and cognitive fallacies, assuming a certain self-awareness when it comes to thinking and arguing. One may even delve into the handbooks dedicated to logical culture and compare them to those aimed at encouraging critical thinking—much of the content will be similar.⁶ One may also look on the paper in which Ralph Johnson and Marcin Koszowy argue that LC and the Informal Logic Initiative “which is historically closely allied with the Critical Thinking Movement,” is “a key commonality between

6. Since the notion of LC comes from Polish logicians, and was developed over the course of the last century or so, such books and papers are mostly published in Polish. To mention but a few: (Ajdukiewicz 1985a; Sokołowski 1997; Jarco 1997; Hołówka 2012; Janeczek, Tkaczyk, and Starościc 2018).

the Lvov-Warsaw School and the Informal Logic Initiative” (Johnson and Koszowy 2018, 188, 209). However, there are various reasons why LC and CT cannot be identified. To present just a few:

(A) The two concepts refer to objects of different genera: LC is an *attitude* (of thinking and speaking), while CT is a *skill*. This means that the latter is a tool, which one may use in order to achieve a certain goal, whereas the former entails a more constant disposition, which cannot be “turned on or off” as needed. A person could possess CT skills, and this might involve being critical in some respects and non-critical in others.

(B) CT does not usually include a moral dimension, whereas this is required by LC. Critical thinking is morally neutral: this means that like any other skill or craft, it could be used to serve malign purposes—something not possible for LC, which demands a certain ethos and promotes certain values such as honesty, charity and tolerance.

(C) LC refers not only to thinking, but also to speaking: members of the LWS put a great emphasis on the ability to speak clearly, provide precise definitions, and adapt to a given communicative situation. CT, on the other hand—at least at a glance—refers to thinking, assessing information, and evaluating reasoning.

From this it follows that the notion of LC involves critical thinking skills, but also includes a few additional elements beyond this, such as moral culture, clarity in language, and an ability to communicate successfully. Logical culture presupposes critical thinking skills, but is not limited to these. Some other reasons to differentiate the two concepts are, for instance, the fact that members of the LWS were aware of and made use of the notion of CT, but still went on to develop and promote their notion of logical culture (Będkowski 2019, 8), and that LC can be a property not only of individuals, but also of a society.⁷ Still, the most important differences are surely those

7. “The logical culture of society has specific features and manifestations to which we should pay attention. We meet them in social life where human thoughts come into contact with each other, clash, interact or compete with each other in mental, political, organisational life, and at meetings in public and discussions, in the press and in other publications, in teaching, in legislation and in the various ways of regulating interpersonal relations. Everywhere there, logical culture introduces clear ordering according to the rules of classification and scheduling, proper determination according to the rules of defining, protects against premature generalizations and mechanical schematization, helps to reasonably organise work. The most

presented in (A)–(C) above, and on their basis we may conclude that given their significant dissimilarities, these concept cannot be equated and should be treated as distinct. Having established this, we may now move on to the main thesis of the present paper.

4. CHRISTIAN PHILOSOPHY AND LOGICAL CULTURE

Although there are many conceptions of what Christian philosophy is, we will assume that it amounts to a tradition of research developed by Christians for Christian purposes (e.g., criticism of Marxism, or the explication of Church doctrine), with a purely philosophical methodology that proposes solutions of a kind that would not make sense outside of a specifically Christian context.⁸ This definition is intended to exclude from its scope philosophers who take up religious themes for the purpose of criticising them (e.g., Nietzsche), and to distinguish philosophy and its investigations from theology. It also assumes that not all philosophical reflection undertaken by Christians counts as Christian philosophy, but only that which in some way or other is committed to grounding or deepening a Christian worldview.⁹

Let us note that although Christian philosophy has shown, over the course of its history, some leanings towards the cultivation of logical virtues, this is not an essential feature. For some unquestionable examples of Christian philosophers making intensive use of the apparatus of logic, we may turn to Thomas Aquinas, and such representatives of the Cracow Circle as Józef M. Bocheński and Jan Salamucha. In the case of the former, the use of logic involved the formulation of proofs for theological theses, but also, supposedly, the intuitive application of certain advanced logical rules—e.g., those for non-monotonic logics (Trepczyński 2011). In the latter case, the use of logic was more extensive, and involved the formalisation of theological proofs and concepts (Bocheński 1956; Salamucha 1958).

important moment lies in the fact that logical culture raises in society the level of requirements for clarity and proper justification of statements and slogans” (Czeżowski 1969, 190).

8. It is worth examining the recent series of 14 books dedicated to Polish Christian philosophy, especially *A Companion to Polish Christian Philosophy of the 20th and 21st Centuries*, in which its authors analyse the concept of Christian philosophy (Mazur, Duchliński, and Skrzydlewski 2020). See also the discussion of that volume by Hancock (Hancock 2021), who compares several conceptions of Christian philosophy as put forward by Aquinas, Leo XIII, Pius XI, Étienne Gilson and G.K. Chesterton.

9. There have been many discussions about the definition of Christian philosophy, starting with the argument that the name itself is a contradiction—as Heidegger put it, “a wooden iron” (1985, 80). For more discussion of the question of definition, see: (Aldwinckle 1967; Young 1958).

However, these examples are not representative of Christian philosophy at large; moreover, nowadays a certain aversion to logic—also associated with a certain construal of the critical thinking agenda—can be observed. The sources of this reluctance can be varied: (i) associations, often inaccurate, with amongst other things the Critical Theory of the Frankfurt School, or critical thinking conceived as a form of education for children, (ii) perceptions of ideas relating to critical thinking as anti-religious, or strongly scientific and neo-positivist (i.e. glorifying the scientific method over all other forms of cognition), (iii) discouragement due to the number of different ways of understanding of what critical thinking is, and the number of didactic notions in play, or (iv) a dislike of formal tools, possibly accompanied by a lack of readiness to take the trouble to master them. Of course, one could just try to make a person exhibiting such reluctance aware of what the idea of critical thinking amounts to, construed as a certain form of logic subordinated to practical and didactic goals; nevertheless, to us a different approach seems more promising. We think that in terms of content, the interdisciplinary conception of pragmatic logic that figures in the training associated with logical culture is to some extent compatible with certain forms of critical thinking, while at the same time being free from the undesirable associations of the latter.

We will now present four reasons for thinking that logical culture should be pursued and developed within Christian philosophy in preference to critical thinking. We are inclined to assume that every sort of philosophy stands to benefit from adopting standards of logical correctness with respect to speech, definition and reasoning. However, we also think that LC seems to hold some quite specific attractions where Christian philosophy is concerned, making it a superior alternative to CT.

Reason 1: Truth-commitment

Logical culture, as understood above (i.e. as skills and know-how pertaining to logical thinking and arguing, and communicating in a precise and efficient way, where these are combined with an ethos), requires an ongoing critical engagement with the beliefs people hold, no matter who happens to entertain them. So let us now examine Christian beliefs. Christians, after all, are also called to constantly question their own convictions—even those proposed and adhered to within the Church itself.

This corresponds well to the old tradition expressed in Augustine's words *Deus semper maior* ("always He is greater, no matter how much we have grown"), or when he says that God's way of acting "is far above the reach of my mind; it is too much for me and of myself I cannot see it" It also

relates to the Christian call to *metanoia*, a transformative change of heart or of thinking, which in fact is a spiritual conversion. This also requires a constant questioning and investigating of the principles of faith, scripture, and doctrine, as part and parcel of an ongoing search for God and the truth (2018, 388).

The call to conversion, expressed in the injunction to “repent and believe in the gospel” (Mark 1:15), is not a summons to perform a one-off act, but rather a demand for constant vigilance and purification of the heart. Probably the best description of the dangers lurking for someone who does not harbour such a disposition within is the teaching of Evagrius of Pontus concerning the eight passionate thoughts (*logismoi*), these being gluttony, impurity, greed, sadness, anger, acedia, vanity and pride. They are intrusive thoughts which can be identified with demons due to their insistence and external provenance. Later tradition framed them as the seven deadly sins; however, they were originally more in the nature of misguided judgments about reality, which had to be constantly fought through *metanoia*.

As Władysław Tatarkiewicz observed: “In sum, ... Christian virtues are not only virtues, but also mostly pieces of sensible advice for living” (1979, 178). From this point of view, Christianity appeals to a transcendent standard and indicates that the inertia of thought must be constantly overcome. It is not just a matter of moral excellence, but of simple practicality. On the other hand, this transcendent standard must be put into practice at an existential level through the imitation of Christ. A commitment to truth involves not only truth understood as a property of propositions, but also the kind of truth that determines a certain attitude towards reality and other people.

Given that the concept of LC—as was pointed out earlier—also demands a truth-commitment, it seems like an appropriate attitude for Christian thinkers to adopt. What is more, in contrary to CT, which is a skill, LC is an enduring attitude, and thus not just something to be deployed when needed. From this it follows that it is a better idea for Christian philosophy to adopt, develop, and impart to students. If one wishes to be constantly committed to truth, then it is better to adopt the attitude of logical culture than just make use of critical thinking skills.

Reason 2: Ethical Standards of Thinking and Persuading

The most obvious connection between Christian philosophy and LC is its moral dimension. Given that logical culture requires a certain ethos of thinking and arguing that rejects manipulation, dishonesty and any other immoral or deceitful acts of persuasion, Christian philosophy certainly should affirm such an attitude. Christian anthropology and ethics demand

that we treat the other always as an end, never as a means.¹⁰ Any kind of discussion, especially on a religious or philosophical matter, should rather be a joint collaboration working towards a common good than a contest between argumentative protagonists seeking to overcome one another in front of an audience. Therefore, Christian ethics requires us to avoid any eristic tactics and focus instead on the individual, trying to understand him or her and aiming eventually to share Christian teaching, the Gospel, or one's own experiences of these (which, as a matter of fact, also seems like the best way to approach the task of preaching to others).

From this it would seem to follow that LC, as an overarching attitude towards thought and discussion, is far better suited to Christian philosophy, sharing as it does with the latter the very same ethical standpoint as regards what one should and should not do when arguing with others.

Reason 3: The Vagueness of Religious Language

Finally, Christianity is the religion of the Book and the Word (see the Prologue to John's Gospel, or the Parable of the Sower). Christians are expected to take up an active stance towards the word of God, and Christian tradition has developed various methods of biblical hermeneutic practice, distinguishing *inter alia* between different meanings of the biblical text.

The language used by Christians, as with all other religious language, includes numerous ambiguities, which tend to make its implementation—when teaching, preaching, discussing or describing things—chaotic, if not downright deceptive.¹¹ This is understandable, given that it aims to express one's religious experience, but—as a consequence—such ambiguous language is then subsequently taken up and used by Christian thinkers, philosophers and theologians more generally, causing the language of Christianity to become vague and problematic. To give just one example, from Aldous Huxley:

- But if you want to be free, you've got to be a prisoner. It's the condition of freedom—true freedom.
- "True freedom!" Anthony repeated in the parody of a clerical voice. "I always love that kind of argument. The contrary of a thing isn't the contrary; oh, dear me, no! It's the thing itself, but as it truly is. Ask a diehard what

10. Such an imperative was best expressed in philosophical terms by Immanuel Kant, when he wrote: "So act that you treat humanity, whether in your own person or in the person of any other, always at the same time as an end, never merely as a means" (1996, 429). It may be considered one of the most fundamental laws of Christian ethics.

11. There has been much discussion, to be sure, about the meaning, function and vagueness of religious language, from Ayer (1936) and Wittgenstein (1953) to Ferré (1962) and Scott (2013). However, one thing is certain: it includes many ambiguous terms, but also has the potential to constantly develop such ambiguities (Bocheński 1965).

conservatism is; he'll tell you it's true socialism. And the brewers' trade papers; they're full of articles about the beauty of True Temperance. Ordinary temperance is just gross refusal to drink; but true temperance, true temperance is something much more refined. True temperance is a bottle of claret with each meal and three double whiskies after dinner. Personally, I'm all for true temperance, because I hate temperance. But I like being free. So I won't have anything to do with true freedom." (1955, 122–23)

This is a case of persuasive definition. (To be specific: the No True Scotsman formula.¹²) Yet it might serve as a good example of how far religious language is vulnerable to various ambiguities and semantic modifications. One may also consider the extent to which certain equivocations are involved with such terms as “tradition” or “grace” within Christian discourse. It would be naïve to assume that such ambiguities would vanish thanks to the adoption of a version of logical culture, but a habit of defining ambiguous terms at the beginning of the argument, and of avoiding fallacies of equivocation and implicit persuasive redefinitions, would certainly be beneficial to Christian philosophy.

Logic in its broadest sense—including, for example, speech act theory and the theory of implicature—offers tools for working in the area of textual interpretation and analysis that are by no means dissimilar to the methods developed within biblical hermeneutics. What seems important, however, is that interpretation itself, as a procedure, presupposes the adoption of certain values: e.g., the principle of charity. Thus, interacting with language is not just a matter of proficiency, but also involves a certain sensibility and experience.

Reason 4: The Anti-Doctrinal Connotations of CT

As was mentioned above, CT carries certain largely inaccurate associations with the Critical Theory of the Frankfurt School. That is why many Christians philosophers (and religious thinkers in general) are suspicious towards it, seeing it as an anti-doctrinal, or anti-religious, scientistic movement.¹³ The other reason may be its association with a certain educational movement that encourages the identification and elimination of constraints on thinking—especially with regard to children (but also in

12. Such a definition, when used in argument, is called a semantic argument, as it modifies a term (that is in use) in order to further persuasive goals. See the classification of such arguments in (Pruś 2021).

13. See, for example, the paper “Teaching critical thinking: The struggle against dogmatism” (Gottschalk 2018). Obviously, such a struggle need not imply a confrontation with religion. However, the assumption that it does may well explain the scepticism of many Christian philosophers towards critical thinking.

business organisations). Such initiatives, even if named “critical thinking,” have little in common with CT understood as the ability to think according to logical standards. By contrast, the notion of logical culture clearly refers to a certain attitude, and so is free from such associations, which might well be viewed negatively by Christian thinkers.

Viewed from the perspective of Christian philosophy, it seems fair to say that these four arguments speak in favour of logical culture as opposed to critical thinking. LC’s superiority in this context resides in (A) its orientation towards truth, (B) the moral character of its approach to thinking and arguing, (C) its encouragement of precision of language and successful communication, and (D) its lack of anti-doctrinal connotations. Obviously, LC includes CT (understood as the ability to think in an orderly way according to logical standards), but it offers more than the latter. For an overview of our argument, see the figure 1 below (supported by the informal logic tool, Online Visualisation of Argument, OVA):

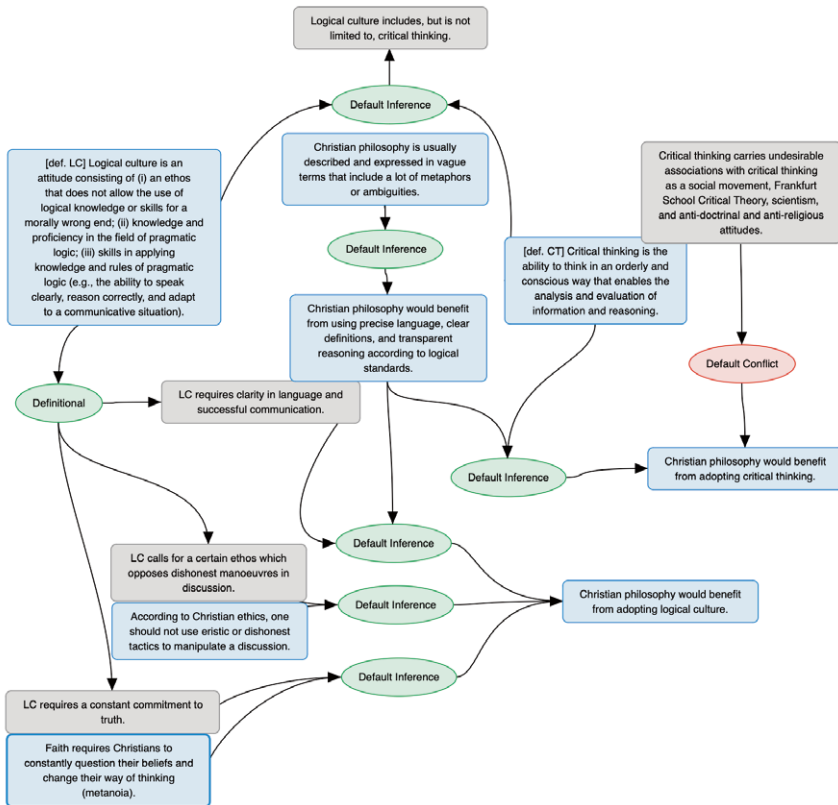


Figure 1 Argument presented in OVA

5. CONCLUSION

In this paper we have argued that the idea of logical culture, as formulated in the Lvov-Warsaw School, could prove beneficial if adopted by Christian philosophers. We have sought to show that while it has sometimes been regarded as a version of (or prototype for) critical thinking, these concepts should be differentiated in order to reflect their substantial differences. Given the latter, we think that logical culture is something that may offer a promising direction for Christian philosophy, raising the level of Christian discourse and helping to promote the values embraced by Christian thinkers. Logical culture also appears consistent with Christian axiology and anthropology in many respects—something which, given that it complements its methodological dimension, seems unremarkable. This is because it provides the basis for a certain unity of lived engagement, involving know-how, skills, and a certain overarching attitude. Furthermore, this need not raise concerns amongst Christian philosophers sceptical towards Critical Theory, and promises to increase the level of clarity of their arguments and encourage the employment of logical methods in their work.

Nevertheless, it is worth noting that the goal of this paper has not been to undermine the idea of critical thinking as such, or its development and promotion in public discourse. We would rather advocate thinking of it as a tool for implementing and disseminating logical culture. Indeed, we take this to be something that public debate is very much in need of today, especially where Internet and media-based discussions are concerned. Moreover, when viewed in the context of Christian thought and its practitioners, this seems to align even more closely with the needs of Christian philosophy.

To conclude, logical culture is an educational objective, linked to what we take to be the interesting concept of pragmatic logic. It is an interdisciplinary notion, delineated by four postulates: clarity, criticality, the diligent exchange of thoughts, and good endeavours. The same postulates can be seen as having a methodological significance on the one hand, and a didactic one on the other. They thus serve to establish criteria not just for good practice where the pursuit of theoretical knowledge is concerned, but also as regards sound everyday thinking. A lifelong task lies ahead, which is for students of logic to master what is involved in various forms of thought clarification, critical examination of arguments, diligent participation in discussions, debates, meetings and committees, as well as effective intellectual work. The path from didactics to methodology marks the transition from schooling-related issues and approaches to advanced knowledge and methods. However, there will remain a single underlying attitude: that of logical culture.

Without a doubt, there are some versions of the concept of critical thinking that are in line with the programme, and the attempted realisations, of a pragmatic approach to logic. While we feel the need to promote the Polish tradition, we believe that the greatest benefit may come from a creative and respectful dialogue between proponents of different conceptions of logic in its practically oriented forms. Indeed, there is still much to be done both in terms of conceptualising these topics and when it comes to proactively pursuing related educational endeavours.

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